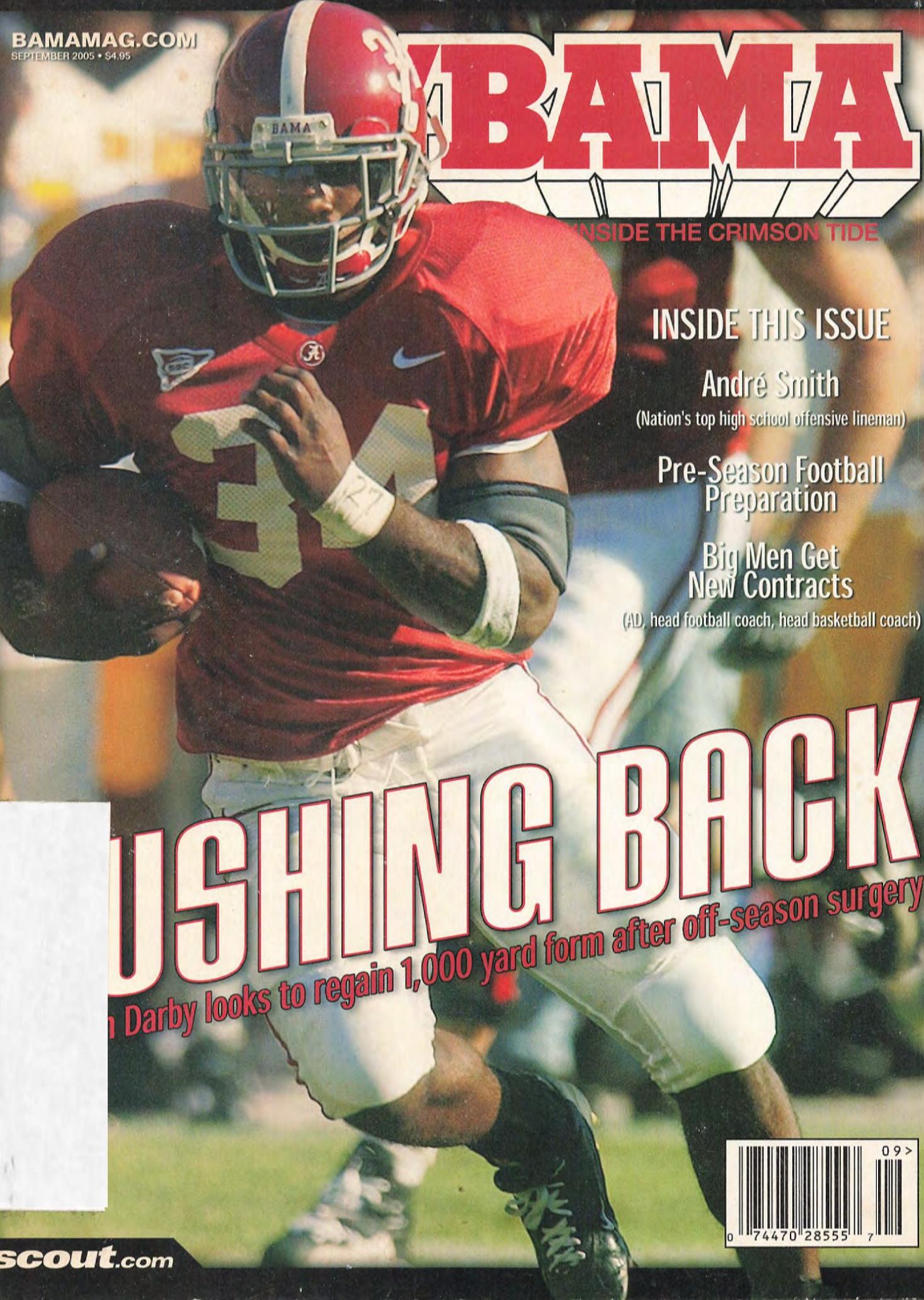


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Preparation

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New Contracts

(AD, head football coach, head basketball coach)

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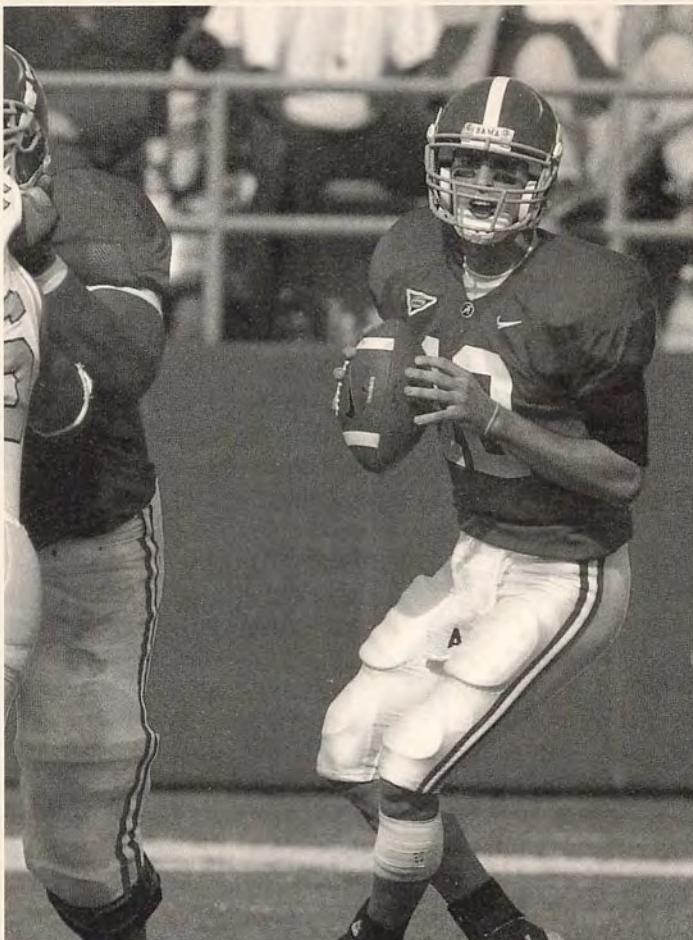
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INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE

September 2005 • Volume 27, Issue Seven

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Fellow Crimson Tide Fans,

Like a baseball manager in spring training, college football fans are generally optimistic as the new season approaches. Never mind that good teams tend to be good and bad teams tend to be bad in succeeding seasons. If the previous season was successful, so much the better. If not...well, we waited for next year and now it is next year.

Historically, everyone associated with Alabama expects to win every year. Even in seasons when it is not remotely possible, the goal has been the national championship. Obviously, a team is not going to win the national championship every year, but the reasoning would be that you are less likely to win it if you are not aiming for it.

There is justification for Alabama fans to be optimistic as the 2005 season approaches; that doesn't mean expect a national championship, but getting back to winning is a reasonable expectation. It is the third season for Coach Mike Shula and his staff—a staff which has stayed intact and which has made progress in every area since the rocky beginning of the bizarre 2003 season.

Although Crimson Tide followers should have a healthy (if that's the appropriate adjective) respect for injuries, it is reasonable for us to also have faith that Bama could not possibly suffer again as last year. It is normal for a football team to have players injured, and no one expects the Tide to go through 2005 unscathed. But what happened to Alabama last season went far beyond the bounds of likelihood, bordering on the statistically impossible. And so every analysis of this year's Crimson Tide football begins with a qualifier along the lines of "If quarterback Brodie Croyle can stay healthy..."

And our coverage of this year's team, beginning with this issue, takes a hard look at the injury situation, including halfback Kenneth Darby's attempted comeback from surgery following a sports hernia. He was part of the solution when he stepped in for the injured Ray Hudson to gain over 1,000 yards, then became part of the problem when he was included in the injury wipe out of last year's offensive skill position players.

Alabama has quality in the skill positions, and even depth and experience at wide receiver. But somehow one tends to overlook the inexperience at right guard when the quarterback is a senior with dazzling potential. There are questions of quality in the offensive line, and in most spots there is little depth or experience.

No punter? No placekicker? No sweat. Good ones will walk on, right?

And still we are optimistic.

Hey! The defense returns ten starters from one of last season's strongest in the nation, statistically. And deep in our hearts we still believe that a team wins with defense.

This is also a season in which the schedule is difficult. In the Southeastern Conference rotating schedule, Alabama lost weak sister Kentucky from 2004 and picked up bully Florida. But most of the contests against high-ranking opponents are in Tuscaloosa's Bryant-Denny Stadium. Welcome Florida and Tennessee and LSU, all recent National Champions. Alabama has a respect for national championship programs.

This season is one more step in the long and tortuous road away from the disheartening cruelty of NCAA sanctions. There are still critical problems in depth at many positions, but a full complement of newcomers for the first time in years is light at the end of the tunnel.

Alabama, as always, wears the mantle of champion, crippled or not. That is good in that Bama players know they are part of something special; and Tide opponents know the same thing. It is a burden in that Alabama never has the luxury of being overlooked. As the premier college football program in the South, Bama is always a circled game in the college football camps of the less acclaimed.

Campus visitors this year will also have an opportunity to see the strides being made in facilities, the bricks and mortar signifying Alabama's quest to be best. While there will be a couple of big holes at Bryant-Denny Stadium this year, it is evidence of an even grander arena for 2006 and beyond. That adds to the optimism that breeds success.

Throughout the South, particularly in Alabama, and especially in Tuscaloosa where so many championships have been built and cheered, there is nothing like football season. And here it is again. So let the games—and the victories—begin.

Sincerely,

Kirk McNair



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Preparing for 2005

Work to be done to get ready for MTSU and beyond

The announcement said that Alabama football practice would begin August 9.

That information is incorrect. At Alabama and other major college football sites, football preparation for players almost never ends. In fact, that's why the NCAA has passed a rule prohibiting any kind of football activity—including the voluntary workouts of the off-season—in certain periods.

Officially, 105 Alabama football players, including at least 25 newcomers, were to report to Alabama on August 8, then begin organized practices on August 9.

(Up until a couple of years ago, newcomers came in for practice a few days before the varsity. That was an excellent idea, a chance for the coaches and new players to get familiar with one another, for the new players to become familiar with such little things as how to line up for exercises or get into huddles, and the basic nomenclature, etc. It was a good thing for the players. The NCAA killed it.)

Bama may bring in 25 new scholarshipped players. Alabama signed 31 players in February. Three—quarterback John Parker Wilson, offensive lineman Drew Davis, and cornerback Lionel Mitchell—entered The University in January. Wide receiver Desmond Jennings signed a professional baseball contract, and will not be reporting. Three others revealed they will not be academically eligible. They are defensive lineman Antonio Forbes, running back Mike Ford, and defensive back Michael Ricks.

Forsafety reasons, practices get underway

gradually. The first four days of work, August 9–12, were to be without full gear or full contact and only one practice per day. The team could go into full gear on August 13, another day of just one practice. Beginning August 14, there could be two practices on every other day until the start of classes on August 24. (So there would be two-a-days on August 14, 16, 18, 20, and 22.)

With the start of classes, remaining players above the initial 105 are permitted to report. Alabama ordinarily allows 20–30 additional players in camp at that time.

All of this is in preparation for the season, which begins September 3 with Alabama hosting Middle Tennessee State University at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

Major college football players (and athletes in many other sports) actually train year-round. After the season ends the players go into an off-season program of strength and conditioning leading up to spring football practice. After spring football practice there is organized off-season conditioning work, including some that can be conducted by position coaches.

In the summer, almost every returning player is in Alabama's two semesters of summer school. And almost every newcomer makes it in for at least the second semester of summer school, which began July 11. And in the summer the players sweat. A lot.

Players are involved in organized strength and conditioning workouts throughout the summer. Although officially voluntary,

the unwritten rule is that players who don't participate are going to be too far behind when August work begins. Obvious exceptions are those rehabilitating from injury, who have a different regimen.

Summer work is under the eyes of strength and conditioning coaches and trainers. Coaches are not allowed to participate. But at last report there were no regulations requiring coaches to put curtains up to block their office views of the practice fields or weight room.

In addition to running and weight-lifting, the skill position players on offense—quarterbacks, receivers, running backs—and linebackers and defensive backs on defense, there is something called “pass skel”—pass skeleton drills a couple of days a week. That means those players go out each afternoon and the offensive players run pass plays against the defensive players.

Because coaches cannot be involved in this work, the players are essentially coaching themselves. Last spring freshman quarterback John Parker Wilson was lauded by coaches for doing very well, but Head Coach Mike Shula said several times that Wilson has to get rid of the ball quicker on pass plays. When Wilson was at quarterback in pass skel work, the defensive players on the sideline began counting on the snap. “One...Two...Three...” And if he still had the ball, “Sack!”

Quarterback Brodie Croyle said, “It's been a busy summer. The strength and conditioning workouts are at either 7:30 a.m. or 1:30 p.m. Two days a week we had pass skel. And then

every night the receivers and quarterbacks watch film. So a couple of days a week the receivers and quarterbacks spent about eight hours together and three or four hours the other days."

Croyle said, "This has been a lot more productive summer than last year. We had so many young receivers last year that we were spending all our time teaching them the routes. This year we have all that down and it's a matter of fine-tuning."

There's a lot of interest in Wilson and in Marc Guillon and even incoming freshmen Jimmy Barnes and Jimmy Johns. But the biggest interest, of course, is in the starting quarterback, Brodie Croyle.

Croyle came to Alabama with almost everyone expecting him to be Superman. Never mind that he had missed his entire senior season in high school with a knee injury. He was redshirted in 2001, then played behind Tyler Watts as a freshman in 2002, had a bad shoulder as a sophomore, tore up his knee in the third game of last season. He had surgery last year, was limited in the spring, and now is ready for his senior year. And everyone says that his knee is fine, that he will be ready to go when Alabama opens the season.

Croyle is not the only key Tide recovering from surgery. In an unbelievable year of injuries in 2004, Alabama lost not only its top two quarterbacks, but also its starting halfback in Ray Hudson, its starting fullback and back-up tailback in Tim Castille, and later in the year a 1,000-yard rusher in Kenneth Darby. Hudson was a senior and has departed, but Darby (see Page 16) and Castille are expected back full-speed from surgeries to correct, respectively, a sports hernia and knee.

College football teams do not stay the same. With graduation taking a chunk from each team and recruiting adding new pieces, there is fluctuation. Last year's pre-season concern was wide receiver, where only Tyrone Prothro had experience. Four freshmen—Matt Caddell, D.J. Hall, Keith Brown, and Zeke Knight—came in and played. With Prothro and those four back, along with others, wide receiver this year is a strength of the team.

Last year the offensive line was considered a strength with three returning starters. Two of those starters were seniors, left tackle Wesley Britt and left guard Evan Mathis. They have graduated to the NFL. Another senior, Danny Martz, joined them in the offensive line. With those three gone, the offensive line is this year's question mark area.

It's good to have JB Closner back at center as a three-year starter. That is a key



position on the offensive line. But the only other returning starter and the only player with much experience at all is right tackle Kyle Tatum, who played his first year on the offensive line last season. Chris Capps is expected to take the critical left tackle position (the left tackle is responsible for protecting the back of the quarterback, usually against the best pass rusher for the defense). The guards are likely to be redshirt freshmen who were injured last year, Antoine Caldwell and B.J. Stabler.

It is not good enough for the offensive line to protect the quarterback long enough for him to get the pass away. They have to keep the defensive players from having the opportunity for those legal hits on the quarterback just as he has released the ball.

Tight end was a victim of injuries and graduation as the oft-injured David Cavan and Clint Johnston are now gone. Greg McLain is back, but he has been injured most of the past two years. Best guess is that the job will go either to soph Trent Davidson, who has had some problems as a receiver, or redshirt freshman Nick Walker, who is a little small for blocking assignments. Shula would like tight end to be more important in Bama's offense.

Last year's Alabama defense was statistically one of the best in the nation, and the Tide returns 10 men with starting experience. (Two starters graduated, end Todd Bates and linebacker Cornelius Wortham, but the Tide has three linebackers returning who have started—DeMeco Ryans, Freddie Roach, and Juwan Simpson.)

It is no surprise that a number of Tide defenders are on "watch lists" for post-season awards.

Safety Roman Harper was selected to the Playboy magazine pre-season All-America team, then was put on three watch lists. He

is one of 50 players nationwide named to the Chuck Bednarik Award for the nation's top defensive player. He is also on the Bronko Nagurski Award watch list, also for the top defensive player regardless of position, and for the Jim Thorpe Award, presented to the nation's top defensive back.

Linebacker DeMeco Ryans is also on the Bednarik and Nagurski lists, and is also on the pre-season list for the Ronnie Lott Trophy, given to the "Defensive Impact Player of the Year."

Harper is joined on the Thorpe Award list by strong safety teammate Charlie Peprah.

Wallace Gilberry is on the Ted Hendricks Award watch list for the top defensive end in the nation.

There are also two offensive players on watch lists—quarterback Brodie Croyle for the Maxwell Award, given to the Player of the Year, and center JB Closner for the Outland Trophy, given to the nation's best interior lineman.

Ryans said, "I don't think twice about those things. I think worrying about that has probably hurt more players than helped them. I'm keeping my focus on the season. If the team does well then it probably means that I did well."

Gilberry is a sophomore, but the other nominees are seniors. Gilberry will be the only new starter on the defensive line, joining end Mark Anderson and tackles Jeremy Clark and Rudy Griffin.

In addition to Harper and Peprah, the Tide returns starting cornerbacks Anthony Madison and Ramzee Robinson.

With the defensive starting lineup pretty well set the emphasis will be on developing depth. There are some proven back-ups, but not many as NCAA scholarship cuts from previous years continue to work against Alabama.

And for those who want to start worrying early, seven of those defensive starters are seniors and will be gone after this year.

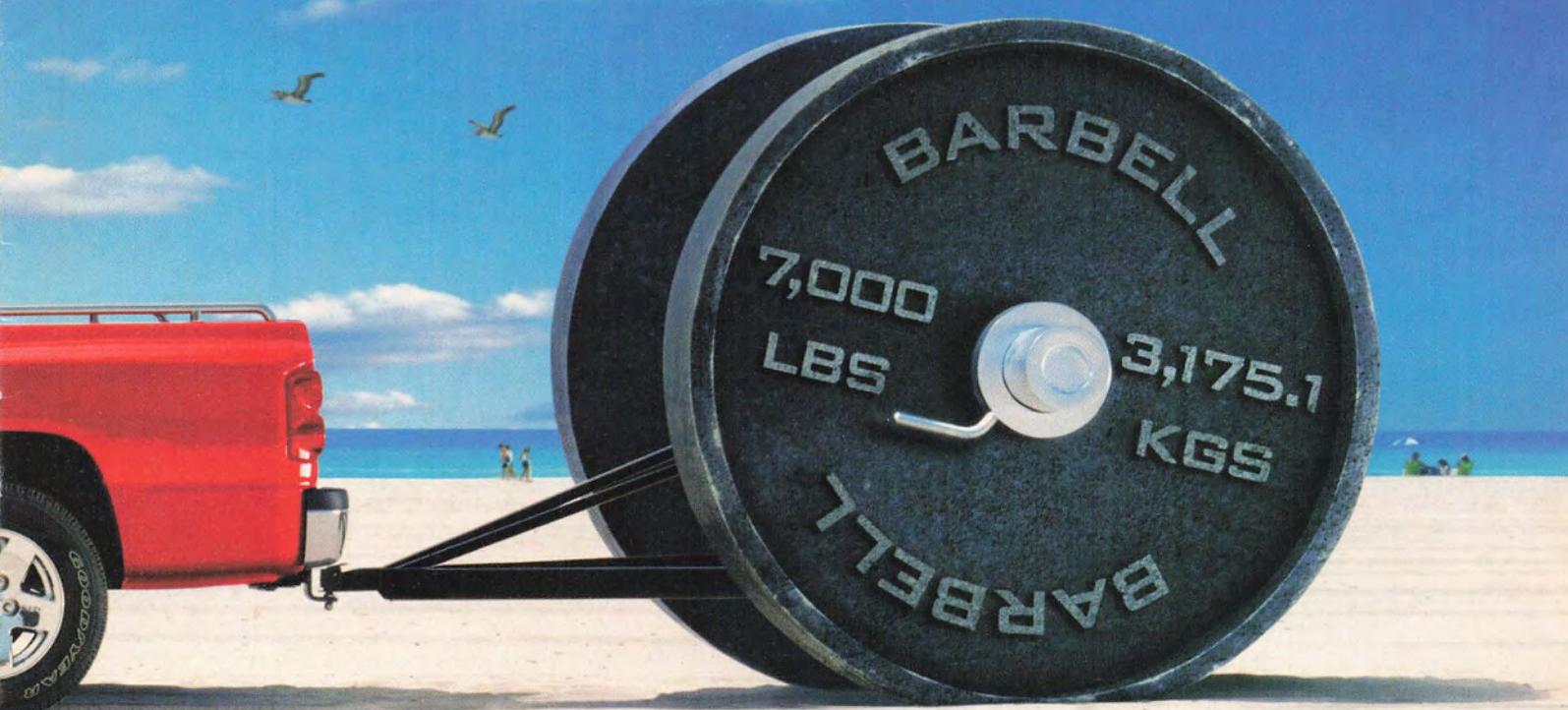
The most talked-about area of special teams plays are the kickers -- the punters and place-kickers -- and Alabama has to replace both Bo Freelend and Brian Bostick from last season. Spring results were not good, but kickers seem to emerge and there will be some highly-regarded walk-ons joining the team this year.

Alabama has the speed and athletic ability to have good overall special teams play. Very little overall special teams work is done in the spring because newcomers frequently fill many of the positions on coverage and return teams. Drew Lane is back to snap on both punts and placekicks.



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Extensions For Big Three

Moore, Shula, Gottfried have new contracts

By Kirk McNair

Former Alabama Football Coach Paul Bryant was late in his Crimson Tide career when he revealed a detail of his contract to visiting sportswriters. The University had offered him a lifetime contract, but Bryant had turned it down.

"Did you want it to be longer?" asked Jack Hairston, then sports editor of the Gainesville Sun.

Compared to the high pay, millions of dollars in some cases, for today's head football coaches, Bryant made a relatively small salary as athletics director and head football coach at Alabama. Today's head football coaches, with nothing close to the credentials of Bryant, might wonder what Bryant would make in today's inflated market.

Be that as it may, the facts are that both coaches and universities are satisfied with the high salaries that also come with a string attached. It was Bryant's contention that a contract was only for the benefit of the coach, which was true in his day. A coach could walk out on a contract (as did Bryant on a couple of occasions) and the school had no recourse. Today if a coach leaves for another job, he (or the school hiring him) must leave something behind—a buyout payment. When Dennis Franchione left Alabama for Texas A&M, Alabama Athletics Director Mal Moore picked up \$1 million from the Aggies.

This was a big summer for athletics contracts at Alabama with the Big Three—Athletics Director Mal Moore, Head Football Coach Mike Shula, and Head Men's Basketball Coach Mark Gottfried—all getting contract extensions.

University President Dr. Robert E. Witt and the Board of Trustees have recognized the job that Moore has done in his first five years and recently rewarded that work with a five-year contract extension and hefty raise. The 65-year-old Moore will be on the job until 2010 if he so desires.

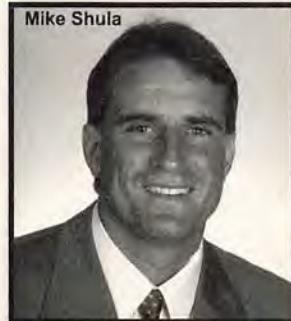
Moore has been athletics director since 1999. He has guided Alabama through difficult times, including NCAA probation for the football team and the carousel of coaches that included the firing of Mike DuBose, the resignation of Dennis Franchione, and the firing of Mike Price before the current hiring of former Crimson Tide quarterback Mike Shula.

But Moore, who previously served The University as a football quarterback, assistant

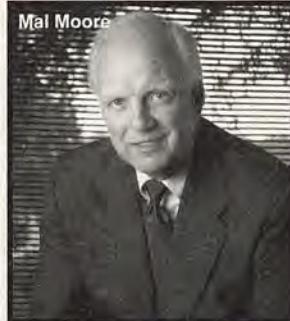
Mark Gottfried



Mike Shula



Mal Moore



coach, and offensive coordinator and who has been a part of seven national championships, will likely best be remembered for the Crimson Tradition Campaign. He conceived and has orchestrated a capital campaign project of over \$100 million that includes improvements and additions in almost every area, including the current renovation of Coleman Coliseum and expansion of Bryant-Denny Stadium.

"I have the utmost respect for the job that Mal Moore has done," Witt said. "He has provided steady leadership through a very difficult period."

John McMahon, Jr., of Birmingham, president pro tem of the Board of Trustees, said it is the feeling of board members that "Coach Moore is the right person to lead us through a very difficult period."

The new contract includes a raise of some \$75,000 per year to \$325,000 annually. His salary ranks in the top 25 per cent of Southeastern Conference athletics directors.

Moore said his health is not an issue, despite a mild heart attack in 2001. "I feel fine and I look forward to some happy years for our fans and coaches," Moore said.

It was Moore who announced the extensions for Shula and Gottfried.

In the case of Shula, who has had little success insofar as the won-lost record, it was a simply an extension of his contract by one year, through January 31, 2010. There were no other changes to his contract, including his \$900,000 annual compensation package.

"I am very appreciative of Coach Shula and his staff for the job they have done over the past two years," Moore said. "We are emerging from a very difficult period in our history and the stability provided by Coach Shula and his staff has played a large part in that recovery. I

feel Coach Shula has this program headed in the right direction and I am confident that he can lead Alabama back to a position of national prominence and prestige."

Shula, 40, was hired at The Capstone on May 8, 2003. He begins his third season at Alabama this fall.

"I am humbled by The University of Alabama's generous offer to extend my contract," Shula said. "This extension reinforces the University's resolve to restore our football program to national prominence. That remains my top priority."

For the first time in Alabama history, the Crimson Tide football coach is not the highest-paid coach. That honor now goes to Head Men's Basketball Coach Mark Gottfried. Moore announced that Gottfried has signed a new contract that will run through June 30, 2011. The new contract also provided a raise to \$1 million a year, making Gottfried the first Alabama basketball coach to reach the million dollar mark.

"I feel this new contract reflects the tremendous progress coach Gottfried has made not only on the basketball court, but in the graduation rates of his student-athletes as well," Moore said. "The graduation rates and APR (Academic Progress Rate) in men's basketball was among the very best nationally and that is a very important area to me and Dr. Witt."

"Coach Gottfried has been a tremendous ambassador for the game of college basketball and that has translated to increased attendance, too."

The Compensation Committee of the Board of Trustees recently approved the new contract which will pay a \$200,000 base salary and an additional \$800,000 in talent fees. Gottfried's bonus package was also restructured.

continued on page 26

HOT LIST

2006 Alabama Football Prospects Hot List

Here is a list of high school senior prospects from Alabama and also from outside the state who have been linked with Alabama. It should be stressed that this is not Alabama's official recruiting list. This is based on recruiting reports done by the experts at 'BAMA magazine and BamaMag.com, including Andrew Bone, Scott Kennedy, and Jamie Newberg. It includes one junior college prospect who has committed to Alabama. Signing Day is February 8, 2006.

Name	Pos	Hgt	Wgt	40	Hometown (School)
Earl Alexander	WR	6-4	203	4.55	Phenix City (Central)
C.J. Bailey	CB	5-10	180	4.6	Moss Point, Miss.
John Bell	DE	6-2	245	N/A	Shreveport, La. (Evangel Christian)
Chip Bowden	QB	6-0	200	4.7	Plant City, Fla. (Durant)
Chris Brown	RB	5-10	195	4.5	Alexandria, La.
Justin Bullard	S	6-1	170	4.63	Millbrook (Stanhope-Elmore)
*Tremayne Coger	CB	5-10	176	4.47	Columbia, Tenn. (Central)
Riley Cooper	WR	6-4	205	N/A	Clearwater, Fla. (Central Catholic)
London Crawford	WR	6-2	186	4.55	Mobile (Davidson)
*Andy Davis	S	6-0	200	4.45	Birmingham (Briarwood Christian)
Anthony Davis	QB	6-0	195	4.7	Montgomery (Carver)
*Preston Dial	TE	6-4	242	4.75	Mobile (UMS Wright)
Richard Dickson	TE	6-4	238	4.77	Ocean Springs, Miss.
Anthony Dixon	RB	6-1	228	4.6	Terry, Miss.
J.D. Douglas	LB	6-3	200	4.6	Prattville
Rob Drum	OL	6-7	265	5.35	Birmingham (Spain Park)
Randy Dupree	RB	6-0	205	4.6	Attala (Etowah)
Will Fidler	QB	6-4	195	4.8	Henderson, Ky. (Henderson County)
Aaron Finchd	LB	6-0	234	N/A	Springdale, Ark.
Michael Goggans	TE	6-3	246	4.63	Alexander City (Benjamin Russell)
Terry Grant	RB	5-10	187	4.5	Lumberton, Miss.
Jacobi Graves	DT	6-6	260	N/A	Attala (Etowah)
Tim Hawthorne	WR	6-2	192	4.65	Homewood
*Charlie Higgenbotham	LB	6-0	210	4.65	Mountain Brook
*Jeramie Holifield	DE	6-5	250	4.5	Hoover (NW Mississippi JC)
Maurice Hurt	OL	6-4	344	5.7	Milledgeville, Ga. (Baldwin)
A.J. Jones	LB	6-2	190	4.5	Tampa, Fla. (Middleton)
Anthony Jones	WR	6-0	170	4.6	Tallahassee, Fla. (Rickards)
Donnie Kirby	QB	6-1	188	N/A	Chesapeake, Va. (Great Bridge)
Charlie Kirschman	LB	6-3	225	N/A	St. Augustine, Fla. (Nease)
Antonio Lowery	LB	6-2	210	4.7	Miami, Fla. (Columbus)
Mathew Malouf	QB	6-2	210	4.5	Oxford, Miss.
Craig Marshall	DE	6-5	217	4.7	Ft Walton Bch, Fla. (Choctawhatchee)
McKenzie Mathews	DE	6-2	240	4.8	Syracuse, N.Y. (Christian Brothers)
Greg McElroy	QB	6-3	212	4.9	Southlake, Texas (Carroll)
Everett Mitchell	QB	6-1	150	N/A	Corinth, Miss. (Biggersville)
*Bryan Motley	OL	6-2	274	5.3	Autaugaville
Derrick Odom	LB	6-2	205	4.5	Jackson, Miss. (Callaway)
*Taylor Pharr	OL	6-6	265	N/A	Birmingham (Shades Valley)
Jordan Pugh	CB	5-11	183	4.45	Plano, Texas (West)
Tim Rawlinson	LB	6-1	215	4.65	Prattville
Morrice Richardson	LB	6-2	215	4.75	Atlanta, Ga. (Westlake)
Jermarcus Ricks	OL	6-4	285	5.3	Leighton (Colbert County)
Daron Rose	OL	6-5	310	5.4	Tampa, Fla. (Jefferson)
David Ross	OL	6-4	285	5.3	Homewood
Charles Scott	RB	6-0	220	4.55	Jonesboro, La. (Hodge)
Chris Smelley	QB	6-2	203	4.9	Tuscaloosa (American Christian)
André Smith	OL	6-4	315	5.2	Birmingham (Huffman)
Martez Smith	LB	6-0	204	4.5	Camden, Miss. (Velma Jackson)
Alex Stadler	OL	6-6	300	N/A	Bealetton, Va. (Liberty)
Daniel Stegall	QB	6-2	180	4.55	Greenwood, Ark.
Anthony Summers	WR	6-3	200	4.55	Olive Branch, Miss.
Ben Tate	RB	5-11	205	4.5	Newark, Md. (Snow Hill)
Tim Tebow	QB	6-3	225	4.6	St. Augustine, Fla. (Nease)
Kiante Tripp	OL	6-5	250	5.0	Atlanta, Ga. (Westlake)
Marcus Udell	CB	5-11	180	4.5	Tallahassee, Fla. (Godby)
Garrett Utt	QB	6-4	197	N/A	Atlanta, Ga. (Lovett)
Daniel Wenger	OL	6-4	285	5.3	Ft Lauderdale, Fla. (St Thos Aquinas)
Steven Wesley	DE	6-3	235	N/A	Bartow, Fla.
Jared White	WR	6-1	175	N/A	Mobile (Williamson)
Tria White	OL	6-5	280	N/A	Haines City, Fla.
Troy White	OL	6-5	285	N/A	Haines City, Fla.
Justin Woodall	S	6-1	200	4.75	Oxford, Miss. (Lafayette)
Erroll Wynn	RB	5-10	204	4.65	Jonesboro, Ga. (Mundy's Mill)
Terrell Zachery	WR	6-1	189	4.54	Wadley

*Committed to Alabama

By Andrew Bone

Mr. Smith Goes Where?

Lineman André Smith is top prospect in Alabama

A popular movie of yesteryear was "Mr. Smith Goes To Washington." The "Mr. Smith" on the recruiting radar screen this year is André Smith, and the 6-foot-4, 325-pound offensive lineman from Huffman High School in Birmingham can go wherever he pleases.

Smith is rated a five-star prospect by Scout Media, considered the number one offensive lineman (and second player overall) in the nation. Smith first made national headlines in January when he went to the Scout-sponsored combine in San Antonio, Texas, which is associated with the U.S. Army All-American Game, sponsored by Scout.

The state of Alabama has produced some very good offensive linemen over the years, including John Hannah, considered

the finest offensive lineman of all time by the likes of Sports Illustrated, and Chris Samuels, an All-Pro performer for the Washington Redskins. Both starred at Alabama before successful professional careers, and Crimson Tide recruiters hope Smith follows that same career path.

But it won't be easy to lure the big man 60 miles down the road to Tuscaloosa. Virtually every team in the nation has contacted Smith and will pursue him up until signing day next February.

'With a list of scholarship offers hovering around 40, the mammoth lineman has seen an elite group of coaches from across the country visit during spring evaluation. His scholarship offers include all Southeastern Conference schools, and top programs such

as Oklahoma, Miami, Michigan, USC, and North Carolina.

Smith did not grow up an Alabama fan (or fan of any other school, for that matter). Therefore out-of-state schools are putting on a full court press for André's signature. Smith said, "Whoever won, I rooted for them. I was always a bandwagon fan."

Staying close to home is not a determining factor in his decision, either. "I have family all over the United States," he said. My mom is from California. I have uncles in Oregon, family in Texas, Georgia, and Florida."

Smith has been hesitant naming favorites and said early in the recruiting process, "Anybody who is interested in me, I'm interested in them. I want to take it all in and enjoy the process. I listen to my parents, my coach and my pastor. They tell me to put my faith in God; He won't put me in a position that I can't succeed."

As his senior season is about to kick off, André knows he must trim his list of favorites to a manageable group of schools where he might consider playing college football. He will take five official visits. Schools in the running for that important leg of the recruiting race include: "Alabama, Auburn, Florida State, Miami, Oklahoma, USC, Tennessee, LSU, Georgia, Florida, Vanderbilt, and Arkansas," Smith said in July.

Smith has visited The Capstone on several unofficial visits, and his cousin is Tide junior defensive tackle Dominic Lee. "Alabama has a lot of tradition," Smith said. "Whenever you speak of tradition, you mention Alabama before any college team. I love that about Alabama."

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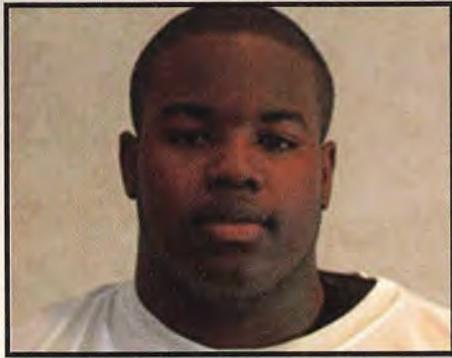
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top offensive lineman in the country, Smith is happy with his latest honor. With all the national publicity, Smith knows what is expected of him on Friday nights.

"I don't think it will distract me at all," he said. "You can't get a big head when you receive an honor like that. Of course it's great to be named the top offensive lineman, and I am very honored. I am still going out there to work hard and have fun. I know now that everyone I go up against will bring their 'A' game when they go up against me. I will have to keep working hard everyday. I have to be prepared."

Smith said, "This summer I have been really working hard at staying calm while I'm out on the field. I have been working on getting my feet faster. We have been doing a lot of conditioning this summer as a team. We are starting to look really good. I have actually lost about eight pounds this summer. I am down to about 320 pounds."

Smith has been taking a bit of a breather from colleges this summer. He has been taking unofficial visits to camps in which his younger brother participates which is why he has been to Alabama.

Smith has been thinking of college games he would like to attend this fall.

"I know I will go to a ton of games this fall," he said. "I haven't decided all the ones I am going to yet, but I do know I will attend the Miami-Florida State game. It's on a Monday night."

You can watch the number one offensive lineman in the country, who recorded 110 pancake blocks during his junior campaign, on Friday nights during football season at Huffman High School or visit BamaMag.com for video highlights and complete coverage of his recruitment.

Smith will announce his decision with Scout.com and Countdown to Signing Day in February on national signing day. ■

"Anybody who is interested in me, I'm interested in them. I want to take it all in and enjoy the process. I listen to my parents, my coach and my pastor. They tell me to put my faith in God; He won't put me in a position that I can't succeed."

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Other Big Men In State

More top linemen, linebackers, tight ends in Alabama

By Andrew Bone

André Smith is a national elite offensive lineman, and the class of 2006 throughout Alabama shows talent at the offensive line positions. This year, a look at the "Big Men" in Alabama high school circles begins with offensive linemen.

Here's an up-close look at the Big Men—offensive and defensive linemen, tight ends, and linebackers:

Offensive Linemen

In addition to André Smith, college recruiters have been monitoring Taylor Pharr of Shades Valley, Brian Motley of Autaugaville David Ross of Homewood, Robert Drum of Spain Park, Heath Batchelor of Haleyville, Bryan Morgan of Hoover, and Mark Melichar of Oak Mountain.

Taylor Pharr, 6-6, 285, from Shades Valley has given his verbal commitment to Alabama. Pharr was holding offers from Auburn, Clemson, Louisville, Mississippi State and Vanderbilt. Pharr received his scholarship offer from the Crimson Tide following an outstanding camp performance in Tuscaloosa.

He grew up an Alabama fan, and said, "The thought of playing for a school like Alabama is unbelievable. You can't say enough about Alabama. Alabama is a place I've wanted to play since I was a little kid." Pharr's commitment to Alabama is solid, and he will not take visits to any other schools.

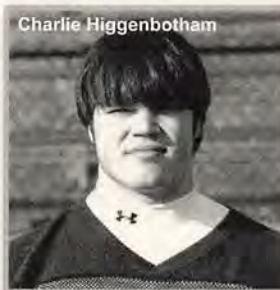
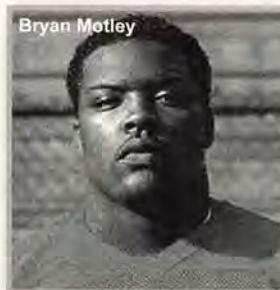
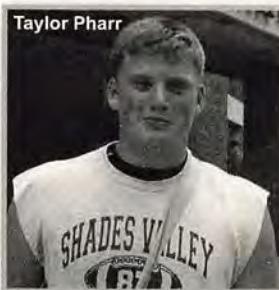
Bryan Motley, 6-2, 274, from Autaugaville has given his verbal commitment to the Crimson Tide. Motley had a summer camp mission: Travel to Tuscaloosa, showcase his skills to the Alabama coaches at the Crimson Tide camp, and receive a scholarship offer.

Mission accomplished.

High schools coaches assisting the Tide staff during summer camps confirmed Motley was one of the most dominating offensive lineman at the mini-camp. Motley sees action at offensive tackle and defensive end in high school. For his junior campaign, he was named all-state and selected to play in the Junior All-Star game in Troy. The Tide offered early, and landed a hoss. "Alabama is the place I've always wanted to go, and I'm 100 per cent committed," he said. I'm not going to take anymore visits. The only school I'll visit in the fall is Alabama."

David Ross, 6-4, 285, has offers from Alabama, Auburn, LSU, Vanderbilt, Tennessee, Florida, and Louisville. His junior performance earned him Super All-State. Ross anchors the line for defending Class 5A state champion Homewood. He is a very smart player, is well-coached and has good techniques. Ross excels at pass blocking and run blocking. Ross commented after a recent unofficial visit to The Capstone, "I was real impressed with the visit," he said. "They are building a big-time program. The facilities are second to none." The Crimson Tide and Auburn will have an in-state battle for his signature.

Robert Drum, 6-7, 265, from Spain Park in Hoover, has one year experience of playing high school



football. The ACC schools are impressed, and Duke and Georgia Tech have extended scholarship offers. Louisville, Central Florida, and Marshall have offered as well. Alabama, Auburn, Vanderbilt, Florida, and Nebraska are showing interest and are eager to see Drum perform during his second year of football. He turned in a solid performance at the Scout.com combine. Drum's times in the 40-yard dash and shuttle runs were among the best at the combine at his position. Drum's early favorites include Alabama, Auburn, Georgia Tech and Duke. "Alabama is leading overall," he said. "I really like their tradition and history."

Heath Batchelor, 6-7, 280, was a star performer at the Scout.com combine held in the spring in Auburn. His combine numbers included a 5.13 seconds in the 40-yard dash, shuttle time of 4.79, and a broad jump over eight feet. Batchelor will begin as a fourth year starter at offensive and defensive tackle. During his junior campaign, he recorded 66 tackles and seven sacks on defense. He hears regularly from SEC schools. Batchelor grew up an Alabama fan, but said, "I'll go anywhere." Batchelor has the size, speed and pure athletic ability to shine on the next level. Batchelor scored a 21 on the ACT, and he finished his junior year with an overall 3.8 GPA.

Bryan Morgan, 6-3, 240, from Hoover, was named captain of the Junior High School All-Star game. From a strong Hoover program, Morgan was named most outstanding lineman, and 6A all-state. Morgan plays in a pass-happy offense, and pass blocking is one of his strong points. College coaches are recruiting his services as an offensive guard or center. He is holding offers from Duke and Louisville. An advantage playing in one of the top high school programs in the nation is that college coaches will see him this fall. Morgan has a 3.8 GPA and a 21 on the ACT.

Mark Melichar, 6-5, 276, from Oak Mountain in Birmingham, is receiving a lot of recruiting attention. He holds offers from Southern Miss, Central Florida, and Samford. He was All-Shelby County and was nominated to play in the Alabama Junior All-Star game. Melichar camped at Alabama, Auburn, Ole Miss, Southern Miss and Vanderbilt.

Defensive Linemen

Alabama landed a top flight class of defensive linemen in the class of 2005. Bobby Greenwood and

Byron Walton were the only two in-state defensive linemen as the Tide landed outstanding defensive talent from out of state. The out-of-state players included Lorenzo Washington, Brandon Fanney, Brandon Deaderick and Zach Schreiber. Jeramie Holifield was a part of the 2004 signing class, but failed to meet academic requirements and enrolled at Northwest Community College in Mississippi. He is set to rejoin the Tide as a member of the 2006 signing class. The coaching staff is recruiting several in-state defensive line stars, and will continue looking on a national level for the best players available. Prospects in Alabama are:

Jemarcus Ricks, 6-4, 285, from Colbert County, is a three-year starter on offense and defense. The four-star lineman, by Scout.com, earned 3A all-state his junior year. He holds offers from Alabama, Auburn, Ole Miss, Georgia, Louisville, Mississippi State, LSU, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. Ricks has relatives at the two powerhouse in-state schools--his brother, Courtney Harden, a linebacker for Auburn, and his cousin, Michael Ricks, a 2005 Tide signee. "I really liked working with Coach [Buddy] Wyatt," Ricks said following summer camp in Tuscaloosa. "He showed me a couple of techniques that will help me a lot on the defensive line in the fall." Ricks has named his favorites as Alabama, Auburn, Tennessee, and Georgia. He plans to take official visits before making a decision.

Deantwan "Peanut" Whitehead, 6-5, 220, from West End in Birmingham is the most underrated player in the state for 2006. The talented defensive end missed the majority of his junior season due to a knee injury, and has now fully recovered. Over 30 schools have officially offered, including Alabama. Whitehead claims there was a misunderstanding in June about a commitment to Clemson, and he is open with his recruitment. Whitehead does not claim any favorites, and he hopes to narrow his list by the beginning of the season. Whitehead is close to the Castile family, and the Tide staff would like to add his signature in February.

Bart Eddins, 6-4, 260, from Trinity Presbyterian in Montgomery, says he has offers from Alabama, Auburn, Oklahoma and Louisville. He has not decided how long he will delay his decision for the Auburn Tigers. Though he claims he is undecided, he will follow in his brother's (Bret Eddins) foot-steps and wear the orange and blue.

Jacobi Graves, 6-6, 260, from Etowah High School in Attalla, I grew up an Auburn fan, but admits

with Alabama as his first scholarship offer, the Tide has the opportunity to turn his head. "Alabama has a great atmosphere," Graves said. "They have great coaches. It's a really big deal to go to Alabama. It would be really big to play under a guy like Coach Mike Shula. I really like everything about Alabama football." Graves represented the north squad in the Alabama Junior All-Star game.

Reginald Stokes, 6-3, 230, is a defensive end from Carver in Montgomery. Stokes made a verbal commitment in July to UCLA. Stokes recorded 137 tackles and 9.5 sacks during his junior season. He was honorable mention all-state.

J.D. Lott, 6-4, 212, from Briarwood Christian in Birmingham, had a very impressive performance at the Scout.com combine in Auburn with a 4.67 40-yard dash, 35-inch vertical jump, and a broad jump of 9-9. Lott plays defensive end and sees playing time at linebacker for the Lions.

Rodney Prince, 6-3, 230, from Shades Valley, is a defensive end recording 120 tackles, 10 sacks, four forced fumbles with three fumble recoveries during his junior campaign. Prince holds scholarship offers from Mississippi State and Southern Miss.

Tight Ends

Two years ago, the state of Alabama was loaded at the tight end position as Travis McCall, Nick Walker, and Trent Davidson were heavily recruited, and all signed with the Crimson Tide. McCall returned to the classroom in Prattville for academic reasons, and was a re-sign with the 2005 class. McCall enrolled in June at Alabama and is working out with the team.

Last year, the tight end talent level increased with performers like Tommy Trott, Gabe McKenzie, Charles Hoke, and Michael Johnson. All four were listed in the South Hot 100 by Scout.com. Trott and McKenzie signed with Auburn, Hoke signed with Alabama, and Johnson signed with Georgia Tech.

This year's top Alabama tight end is Preston Dial, 6-4, 245, from UMS-Wright in Mobile. Dial is one of the best tight ends in the South, and with a four-star rating with Scout.com, he ranks as the 14th best tight end in the country. He is explosive off the ball and has incredible hands. Dial is a great blocking tight end and plays with a mean streak. Florida State offered early, but the Tide's offer may land him in Tuscaloosa. Bama figures a favorite over the Seminoles to land Dial..

An intriguing prospect is Michael Goggans 6-2, 247, from Benjamin Russell. Little was known of the Alexander City native until his performance at a Birmingham combine. Goggans was dominating in the one-on-one drills and ran a blazing sub 4.6 40-yard dash. After his combine performance, his stock skyrocketed. Goggans has offers from Alabama, Auburn, Tennessee, Georgia, and Arkansas, among others. He stars at tight end and defensive end, and projects at either position on the next level. In fact, he might also be a college linebacker or H-Back. His top three schools are Alabama, Tennessee, and Louisville. Tennessee has a slight edge over the home-state team, but Goggans said, "Alabama has always been my favorite team. It's an in-state school, and all of my relatives really like Alabama."

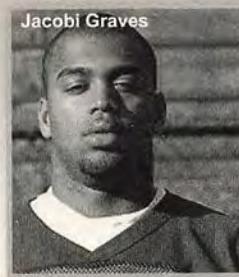
A multi-talented in-state performer who projects as a college tight end is Jeffrey Anderson 6-3, 245, from Southside in Selma. Anderson does it all for his high school squad. He passes, runs, and catches the ball on offense. He is an active defensive performer as well. Anderson has excellent speed as seen in the Alabama Junior All-Star game. Thus far his only scholarship offer is from Louisville.

Linebackers

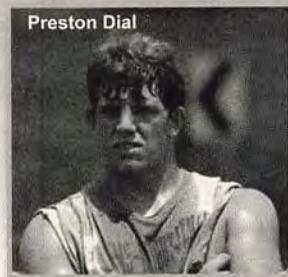
The list of elite Alabama high school senior linebackers seems an unusually small one, but that could change as the season progresses. The ones already identified are fine ones, tackling machines Tim Rawlinson from Prattville, Devon Stallworth from Daphne, and Alabama commit Charlie Higgenbotham, from Mountain Brook. Following these three, it's hard to find exceptional talent within the state borders. The Alabama coaching staff is recruiting several top linebackers out of state. Rawlinson has an offer from the Tide, and Stallworth will see his stock increase later in the season.

Charlie Higgenbotham, 6-0, 215, from Mountain Brook, became the first linebacker commitment of the Tide's 2006 signing class. During his junior campaign, Higgenbotham was a ball hawk as he recorded 169 tackles and was named to the Alabama Junior All-Star team. His excellent speed (4.65), combined with his nose for the ball, has the coaching staff excited. "I'm not the biggest or the strongest, but I can make plenty of tackles," Higgenbotham said. He is on track to qualify with a 3.5 GPA and a score of 1320 on the SAT.

Tim Rawlinson, 6-1, 215, from Prattville, has all the tools for stardom on the next level. The head-hunter is a force on the Lions' dominating defense as he recorded 159 tackles his junior year. He was named to the South squad in the Alabama Junior All-Star game, recorded 12 tackles, and he was named



Jacobi Graves



Preston Dial

Most Valuable Player. Alabama, Auburn, Florida State, Clemson, LSU, and Ole Miss have extended offers. Alabama, Florida State, and Auburn are his top three. The Tide and Seminoles will battle for his signature.

Devon Stallworth, 5-10, 210, from Daphne, gave a tremendous performance at the Scout.com combine in Auburn. He was selected a member of the South squad in the Alabama Junior All-Star game after a monster junior year in which he had 169 tackles. Stallworth has received offers from Auburn and Southern Miss. Stallworth lists his favorites as Alabama, Auburn, and Southern Miss. Stallworth's offers will increase as his senior year progresses. His twin brother, Arnell, is also receiving recruiting interest.

Other in-state linebackers receiving interest include: Andrew Ridgeway, 6-2, 230, 4.8, Fort Payne; Cleveland Tubbs, 5-10, 220, 4.7, Lamar County; James Collins, 6-0, 230, 4.8, Blount; and Jacob Smalley, 6-1, 215, 4.7, Demopolis. ■

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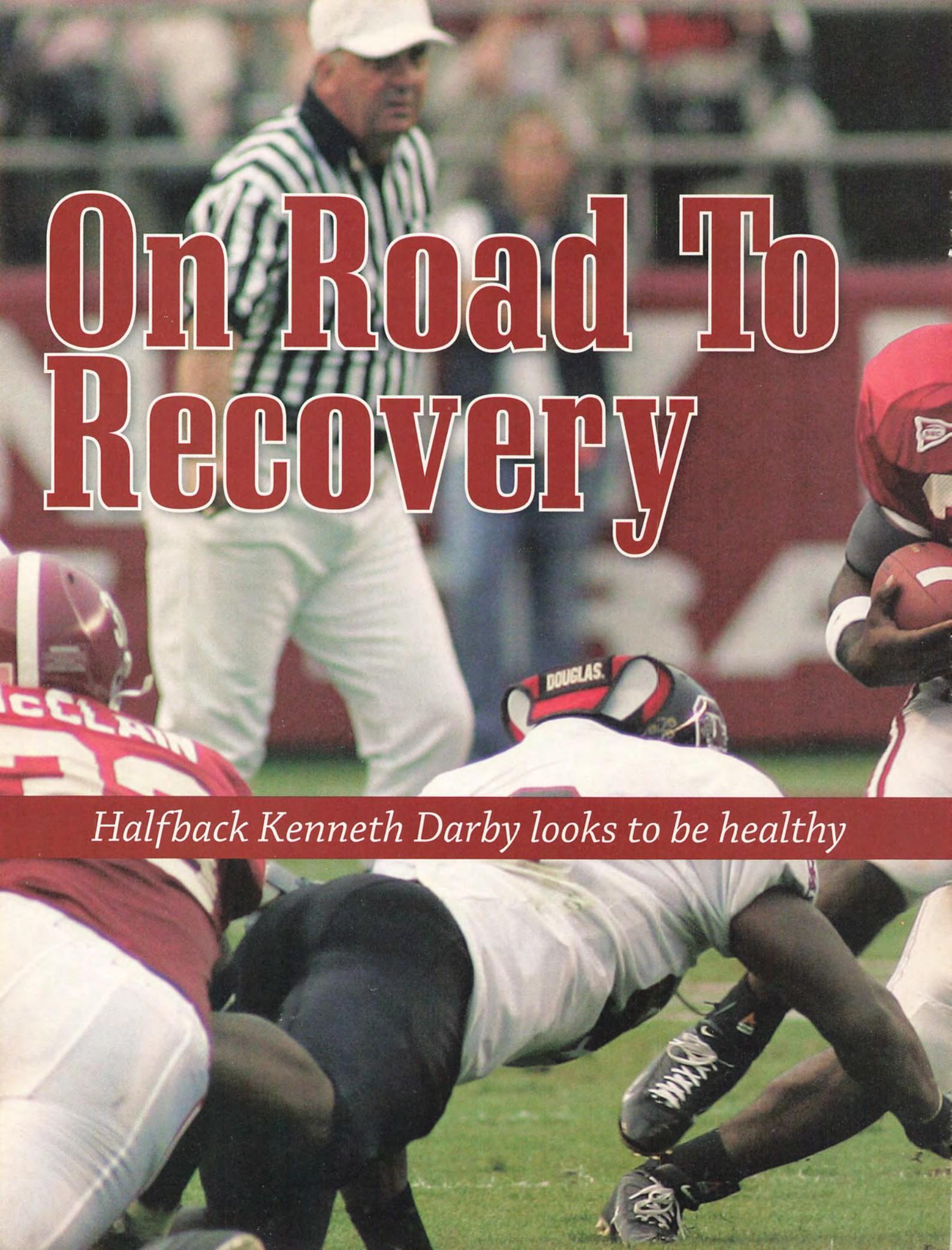
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Halfback Kenneth Darby looks to be healthy



By Mitch Dobbs

One might think it was the time immediately before or after the surgery that is the sharpest memory. Or maybe a milestone in rehabilitation, such as lifting weights or running again for the first time. The answer from Kenneth Darby as the Tide's star tailback was preparing for another workout in the days leading up to his junior season was a surprise.

"The Auburn game," Darby said. "That's really what stands out the most. The Auburn game."

He continued, "How frustrated I was and how mad I was at the same time because I couldn't go out there and perform the way I know I can perform. That's what's really been on my mind the whole time. That's what I think about when I work out and rehab and do whatever. I just think about those last two games and think about those running backs."

For a career that once looked to be in jeopardy, all signs are pointing up for Darby.

His injury was the last among a spate that killed off the Alabama offense in 2004. It's a list most Alabama fans can recite in chronological order: Brodie Croyle, Ray Hudson, Tim Castille and so on. Darby admitted to feeling a bit jinxed after seeing his offensive teammates go down one-by-one last season.

"I'm sitting down on my bed thinking 'Man, I hope this doesn't lead up to me and LéRon (McClain) getting hurt.' I'm thinking that but in the back of my head I said 'I need to quit thinking like that because it's negative thinking.' Then toward the end of the year it bit me," Darby said.

"It" is what Alabama players referred to as the injury bug, and it spread through the offense like a contagious virus. Fortunately, the defense was spared.

It wasn't Darby's first season-ending injury. That came when he hurt his shoulder after 41-yard run against Mississippi in 2003.

"I've never been hurt. No serious injuries ever a day in my life where I had to sit out a practice or a game," he said. "When I got to

college I don't know what happened. In my head I was like 'It's just a learning experience. God has put me through a little adversity to see how I handle adversity.'

But feelings have changed to confidence. "The injury bug is something that has left us," he said.

Darby felt a pain in his lower abdomen in Baton Rouge during Bama's next-to-last regular season game against LSU, and by the following week's game against Auburn, Darby was unable to perform.

"I was just a sitting duck," he said. "I felt like I let the team down and I let myself down. The Auburn game and the Minnesota game we played against some great running backs."

A 'performer' as he likes to think of himself, under healthy circumstances Kenneth Darby would have killed to share a stage and be able to compare himself head-to-head with the best college running backs in the country. Guys like Auburn's Carnell Williams and Ronnie Brown, both first-round picks in this year's NFL draft. And Minnesota's Marion Barber III, a fourth-round draftee. And then there's Laurence Maroney, who rushed for over 2,400 yards in his first two years sharing time with Barber.

"I thought I was comparable with those guys and I thought I could have showed them I was as good as they were, but I wasn't able to do any of that," he said.

To be exact, Darby had 14 rush attempts for 19 yards in the Auburn game, and one attempt for one yard in the Tide's Music City Bowl loss to Minnesota six weeks later.

The pain that made Darby "a sitting duck" was eventually diagnosed as what is referred to as sports hernia. The condition occurs when muscle tissue becomes separated from the pelvic bone. Sports hernia is usually caused by cutting, twisting, turning and pushing the body in different directions. Darby was hard to bring down, with a balanced style of agility and strength that makes his injury seem almost understandable.

As he put it, "I'm more of a 'gotta-go-get-

"I've never been hurt. No serious injuries ever a day in my life where I had to sit out a practice or a game," he said. "When I got to college I don't know what happened. In my head I was like 'It's just a learning experience. God has put me through a little adversity to see how I handle adversity.'

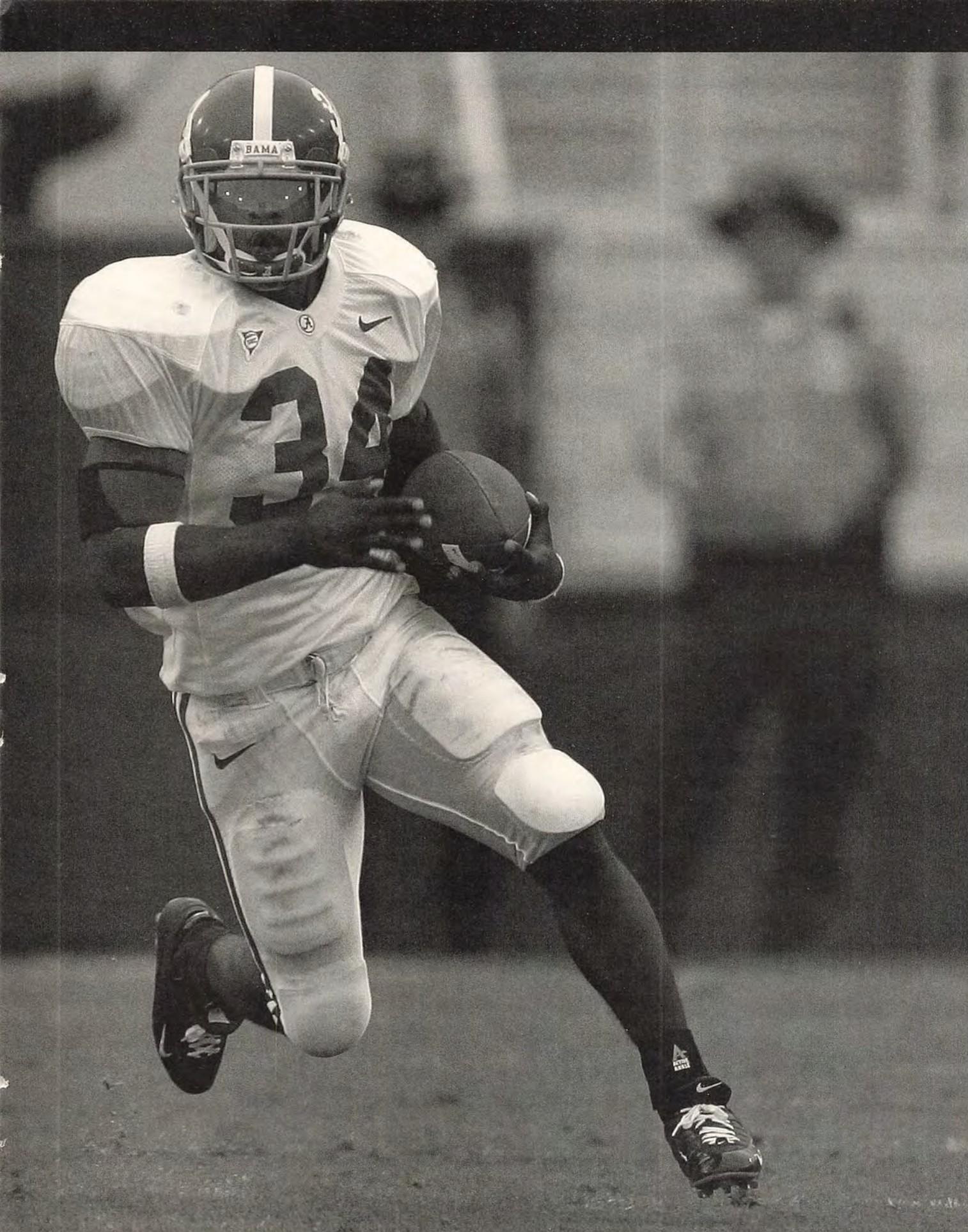


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it' back. If we've got two yards we need to get, I'm going to get it. There isn't a certain style I have but I can shake somebody if it comes down to it." Like Darby on the football field, the injury itself was notoriously elusive.

"It's kind of a strange injury in that you diagnose it by a process of elimination," Alabama Head Football Trainer Rodney Brown said. "You can't do an MRI, you can't do a CT scan or an X-Ray. You eliminate all the other things it could be through these diagnostic procedures, through conservative treatment, through rest, and then when none of that works it gets back to 'Well, this is the only thing that's left.' You don't want to operate on a kid right off the bat, and then find out later it was something that didn't require surgery."

Brown said, "The only time he was down was when it was to the point where it hadn't gotten any better and he was ready to have the surgery done. He said 'Look. We've got to do something. It's not getting better.'"

Darby's diagnosis was all over the map during the end of last football season. First it was termed as an abdominal strain. Then, after a bone scan came back hot Darby thought he had a stress fracture in his pelvis, but that got better and he was still in pain.

Darby eventually got to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, To see Dr. William Meyer, the man who invented the procedure to cure the condition and is considered the authority on sports hernia. Weeks of rest had not made Darby any better, and on March 2, six months and one day from the opening kickoff of the 2005 season, Darby had surgery.

It was time spent waiting to see if he would improve that was the toughest.

Brown said, "The only time he was down was when it was to the point where it hadn't



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gotten any better and he was ready to have the surgery done. He said 'Look. We've got to do something. It's not getting better.'

Of course, the weeks following the surgery weren't much fun either. Because the affected region of the body is involved in virtually any type of exercise, Darby was on strict orders to refrain from any type of physical activity for about a month following the surgery.

"Man, I can't sit still," Darby said. "And then for weeks I had them telling me 'You don't do anything.' I was doing something. It wasn't what the other guys were doing out there and it wasn't what I wanted to do. You know what I was doing? Sitting down. And watching those other guys go out there and perform, getting themselves better. It was hard."

It is difficult to resume an exercise regimen after a long layoff. Add to that the effects of major surgery and the pain was intense.

"To start off with it was horrible," Darby said. "I can't describe it. I felt like I weighed more like 300 pounds. I felt heavy and slow."

It was his rehabilitation, but Darby has a great appreciation for those who stood by him and gave him support—his family, his coaches and the Tide training staff.

"I just thank God for those people," he said. "My trainer, Jeremy Gsell, is one of the most positive dudes I've ever been around. He kept me positive even though the situation may have looked bad. He always had something positive to say to me to keep my head up. I really appreciate him for all that. I'm glad people like that were in my life during that time because I really needed somebody to keep my head up. There were times I felt like putting my head down and just saying 'forget it.'"

Gsell accompanied Darby to Philadelphia for the surgery. It was the first time Darby had faced such a daunting procedure, but Gsell had helped former Bama defensive end Todd Bates go through the same procedure.

Darby recalled fearing that he wouldn't be able to walk out of the hospital, to which

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE

GENE STALLINGS AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS

Alabama football means championships and All-Americans and, for many, memories of a man in a houndstooth hat. Some 60 former Alabama players who performed in Crimson and White over a 75-year period tell us WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE, and many remember Paul "Bear" Bryant. His time as a Bama player, assistant coach, and 25 years as head coach is a major part of Alabama football, but not the only great era. There have also been national championships won under Wallace Wade and Frank Thomas and Gene Stallings. And part of WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE is former Alabama players' expectations of more national titles.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE



GENE STALLINGS

AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS

KIRK McNAIR

The last coach to lead Alabama to the national championship is Gene Stallings, who played and coached for Coach Bryant before becoming a Hall of Fame caliber coach himself.

Not only have the coaches been legendary but that stellar tradition has spawned players enshrined in the College Football Hall of Fame and the NFL's Pro Football Hall of

Fame. Now, Gene Stallings and 'BAMA Editor Kirk McNair have collaborated to bring together many of the greatest players ever to wear the Crimson and White to share their memories in WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE—GENE STALLINGS AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS.

Among those sharing their memories are: from the '40s and '50s, Harry Gilmer and Bart Starr; from the '60s and '70s, Lee Roy Jordan, Joe Namath, Ray Perkins, Ken Stabler, Johnny Musso, John Hannah, and Ozzie Newsome; from the '80s and '90s, Mike Shula and Jay Barker. And many more, including those from the new millennium.

Gene Stallings reveals much of his philosophy and also tells the story of how he did *not* become Alabama's head football coach in 1983. Kirk McNair introduces the players.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CRIMSON TIDE—GENE STALLINGS AND ALABAMA'S GREATEST PLAYERS will be available by mid-August. The hardcover book is more than 300 pages in an oversized format with archival photographs throughout. To pre-order your copy (\$27.95 plus tax, shipping and handling) call 1-205-345-5074. You may request a personalized autograph from Kirk McNair.

2005 Alabama Football Roster



No	NAME, POS	CL	HT	WT	EXP	HOMETOWN	No	NAME, POS	CL	HT	WT	EXP	HOMETOWN
1	Ramzee Robinson, LCB	JR	5-10	182	2L	Huntsville	58	Kyle Tatum, RT	JR	6-7	298	2L	Prattville
2	Simeon Castile, LCB	SO	6-1	187	1L	Birmingham	59	Antoine Caldwell, LG	FR	6-3	281	SQ	Montgomery
3	Jeffrey Dukes, FS	JR	6-3	190	1L	Oxford, Miss.	61	B.J. Stabler, RG	FR	6-4	292	SQ	Grove Hill
4	Tyrone Prothro, FL	JR	5-8	175	2L	Heflin	62	Dawson Brown, LG	SO	6-4	310	SQ	Huntsville
5	Brandon Brooks, FL	SR	5-5	165	2L	Birmingham	63	Mark Sanders, RG	SR	6-7	328	SQ	Ashville
6	Marcel Stamps, S	SO	6-3	190	1L	Brantley	64	Layne Rinks, LT	FR	6-2	275	SQ	Florence
7	Will Oakley, FL	FR	6-1	190	SQ	Ponte Vedra Bch, Fla.	66	Luke Spalding, SN	JR	6-0	217	SQ	Mobile
8	Freddie Roach, MLB	SR	6-2	245	3L	Killen	67	J.P. Adams, LDT	JR	6-3	267	SQ	Northport
8	Adam Thrash, QB	SO	6-4	215	SQ	Little Rock, Ar.	68	Al Jefferson, RG	FR	6-2	275	SQ	Mobile
9	Anthony Madison, RCB	SR	5-9	180	3L	Thomasville	72	Chris Capps, LT	SO	6-5	295	1L	Jonesboro, Ga.
11	Matt Caddell, SE	SO	6-0	180	1L	McCalla	73	Justin Moon, RG	SO	6-5	296	SQ	Guntersville
12	Brodie Croyle, QB	SR	6-3	208	3L	Rainbow City	74	JB Closner, C	SR	6-4	290	2L	San Antonio, Texas
14	John Parker Wilson, QB	FR	6-2	210	HS	Hoover	75	Cody Davis, LT	FR	6-7	282	SQ	Tuscaloosa
14	Jeffrey Aul, P	JR	6-2	208	SQ	Daleville	79	Drew Davis, RT	FR	6-6	290	HS	Evergreen
16	Lionel Mitchell, RCB	FR	6-2	180	HS	Stone Mtn, Ga.	80	Trent Davidson, TE	SO	6-5	270	1L	Brewton
16	C.J. Rhody, PK	FR	6-0	175	SQ	Stuart, Fla.	81	Keith Brown, SE	SO	6-3	185	1L	Pensacola, Fla.
17	Vic Horn, FB	SR	6-1	233	SQ	Huntsville	82	Marcus McKnight, FL	JR	6-2	186	SQ	Jacksonville, Fla.
18	Marc Guillou, QB	JR	6-3	212	1L	Chico, Calif.	84	Zeke Knight, FL	SO	6-4	230	1L	Wedowee
18	Danny Barger, FL	JR	5-11	182	SQ	Tuscaloosa	86	Jamie Christensen, PK	SO	6-0	170	1L	Norcross, Ga.
19	Tim Castile, FB/HB	JR	5-11	231	2L	Birmingham	86	Tramayne Wright, LDE	SO	6-2	240	SQ	Saks
20	Marcus Carter, S	SO	6-1	190	1L	Fort Payne	88	Stephen Kulback, RDE	JR	6-3	255	SQ	Birmingham
20	Rashad Johnson, HB	FR	6-1	183	SQ	Sulligent	89	Nick Walker, TE	FR	6-5	238	SQ	Brundidge
21	Mookie Chaney, FB	FR	6-0	208	SQ	Birmingham	90	Rudy Griffin, LDT	SR	6-0	286	1L	Hepzibah, Ga.
22	DJ Hall, FL	SO	6-3	185	1L	Ft Walton Bch, Fla.	90	Barrett Earnest, TE	SO	6-3	224	SQ	Loretto
23	Jake Wingo, WLB	FR	6-0	203	SQ	Tuscaloosa	91	Chris Harris, LDE	JR	6-5	251	1L	Tuscaloosa
23	Kyle Bennett, FB	JR	6-2	231	SQ	Boaz	91	Will Denniston, TE	SO	6-3	225	SQ	Mobile
24	Travis Robinson, LCB	SO	5-10	180	SQ	Tuscaloosa	92	Wallace Gilberry, LDE	SO	6-2	255	1L	Bay Minette
25	Aaron McDaniel, RCB	FR	6-1	166	SQ	Fort Paine	93	Matt Collins, MLB	SO	6-1	236	1L	Pinson
25	Jeremy Schatz, P	SR	5-7	151	SQ	Homewood	94	Keith Saunders, RDE	SO	6-3	242	SQ	Willingboro, N.J.
26	Charlie Peprah, SS	SR	5-11	193	3L	Plano, Texas	95	Drew Lane, SN	SR	6-1	230	1L	Braxton, Miss.
26	Jake Collins, SE	SR	6-0	190	SQ	Homewood	96	Dominic Lee, RDT	JR	6-2	283	2L	Birmingham
28	Aaron Johns, HB	SO	5-10	185	1L	Thomasville	99	Jeremy Clark, LDT	JR	6-3	299	2L	Daphne
29	Theo Townsend, HB	FR	5-8	172	SQ	Antioch, Tenn.							
30	Bryan Kilpatrick, SS	JR	6-4	193	SQ	Monroeville							
31	Greg McLain, TE	SR	6-2	243	2L	Lineville							
31	Forress Rayford, LCB	SO	5-11	180	SQ	Mobile							
32	J.D. Dailey, WR	SO	6-1	190	SQ	Daphne							
33	LéRon McClain, FB	Jr	6-1	258	2L	Northport							
33	Patrick Burch, TE	FR	6-3	240	SQ	Navarre, Fla.							
34	Kenneth Darby, HB	JR	5-11	205	2L	Huntsville							
34	Courtney Moore, RCB	FR	5-10	185	SQ	Florence							
35	DeMeco Ryans, SLB	SR	6-2	232	3L	Bessemer							
35	Patrick Gordon, FL	FR	6-6	194	SQ	Houma, La.							
36	Eric Gray, RCB	SO	5-11	186	1L	Trinity							
36	David Steakley, SE	SR	5-10	182	SQ	Huntsville							
37	Matt Miller, SE	SR	6-3	210	2L	Rainbow City							
37	Trent Dean, LCB	FR	6-0	185	SQ	Decatur							
39	Justin Ballard, FS	SR	5-11	192	SQ	Eutaw							
40	Ken Vandervoort, WLB	SO	6-3	210	SQ	Anniston							
41	Roman Harper, S	SR	6-1	197	3L	Prattville							
42	Juwan Simpson, WLB	JR	6-2	220	2L	Decatur							
43	Ryan Saxby, PK	SR	6-1	180	SQ	Jonesboro, Ga.							
44	Demarcus Waldrop, WLB	SO	5-11	193	1L	Pinson							
45	Juke King, MLB	SR	6-2	234	1L	Theodore							
47	Mark Anderson, RDE	SR	6-5	253	3L	Tulsa, Okla.							
50	Justin Britt, RDT	SO	6-4	285	1L	Cullman							
52	Taylor Britt, C	SR	6-4	278	SQ	Cullman							
53	Brent Nall, SLB	FR	6-0	213	SQ	Andalusia							
54	Justin Johnson, RDT	SO	6-2	248	SQ	Northport							
55	Terrence Jones, SLB	SO	6-0	216	2L	Fosters							
57	Morgan Garner, RT	FR	6-2	245	SQ	Deatsville							
No	NAME, POS	CL	HT	WT	EXP	HOMETOWN							

NEWCOMERS

15	Jimmy Barnes, QB	FR	6-5	225	HS	Los Alamitos, Calif.
13	Sam Burnhall, DB	FR	6-2	190	HS	Decatur
	Evan Cardwell, OL	FR	6-3	290	HS	Killen
38	Glen Coffee, RB	FR	6-0	207	HS	Ft. Walton Bch, Fla.
	Marlon Davis, OL	FR	6-4	315	HS	Columbus, Ga.
	Brandon Deaderick, DE	FR	6-4	230	HS	Elizabethton, Ky.
	Scott Deaton, OL	FR	6-5	270	HS	Birmingham
	Brandon Fannery, DL	FR	6-5	270	HS	Morristown, Tenn.
	Antonio Forbes, DL	FR	6-4	265	HS	Norcross, Ga.
	Mike Ford, HB	FR	6-2	205	HS	Sarasota, Fla.
	Bobby Greenwood, DE	FR	6-6	245	HS	Prattville
21	Prince Hall, LB	FR	6-0	240	HS	Moreno Valley, Calif.
	Cole Harvey, OL	FR	6-3	255	HS	Tallahassee, Fla.
88	Charles Hoke, TE	FR	6-6	240	HS	Birmingham
40	Baron Huber, LB	FR	6-4	228	HS	Knoxville, Tenn.
10	Jimmy Johns, QB	FR	6-2	225	HS	Brookhaven, Miss.
	Mike Johnson, OL	FR	6-6	285	HS	Pensacola, Fla.
32	Chris Keys, DB	FR	6-2	205	HS	Stevenson
	Travis McCall, TE	FR	6-2	250	HS	Prattville
43	Cory Reamer, DB	FR	6-3	198	HS	Hoover
	Michael Ricks, DB	FR	6-2	185	HS	Courtland
17	Chris Rogers, DB	FR	6-1	178	HS	Lakeland, Fla.
46	Zach Schreiber, LB	FR	6-2	220	HS	Shreveport, La.
29	All Sharrief, HB	FR	5-10	190	HS	Stevenson
	Travis Sikes, DB	FR	6-3	190	HS	Nashville, Tenn.
27	Roy Upchurch, HB	FR	6-0	207	HS	Tallahassee, Fla.
	Byron Walton, DL	FR	6-4	298	HS	Trinity
	Lorenzo Washington, DL	FR	6-4	265	HS	Loganville, Ga.

Gsell responded, "You probably won't, but Todd did."

"He was getting my emotions up," Darby said. "I was all negative and he was coming with positive."

In Hollywood, Darby would have walked out of the hospital. But this is real life.

"After the surgery I wasn't able to walk out," he said with a laugh. "I had to get a wheelchair. I couldn't do it. Jeremy pushed me around the airport in a wheelchair."

Since the surgery, Darby's rehabilitation has been described as uneventful every step along the way. He followed the schedule devised by the trainers and Dr. Meyer very closely and has not had any setbacks. Some expected soreness accompanied him every step of the way, however.

"He's come 100 miles," Brown said. "He's practically there. The average rehab time for this is three months, but not to say that you

wouldn't have some soreness every time you tried something new. A guy like KD comes in here and just wants to play so bad. He'll come in here and just bust his tail every day to get back. He does exactly what you ask him to do and gets here when he's supposed to be here. Sure, you pull for a guy like that. You can't help but do that.

"Early on we'll just go by his symptoms, but there's no reason to believe he's not going to be just as good as he was. You can't foresee the future but everything so far is dead on course for him to come back and be his old self."

No one can say for sure whether Darby will be back to his "old self" or not. But after the jinxed thoughts that crept into his head during last season, you won't get Darby to admit any fear of his skills being diminished because of the injury and long rehabilitation process.

"I'm a positive person," he said. "I try

not to think negative at all. In my head right now, I think for sure I'm going to be 100 percent. I know for a fact if I stay positive and keep doing what I've been doing I should be a better athlete, a better player than I was last year."

At 5-11, 210 pounds, Darby is working to re-gain strength he had a year ago, but he felt confident that he would not only get back to that point, but get stronger.

"I'm trying to put on a little weight so I'll be able to lower my shoulder a little more than I did last season," he said. "I know going into the season most teams are going to think that I'm a little shaky back but they don't know that I've got something else in storage, too."

Darby said he isn't concerned with gaining 1,000 yards for a second consecutive season, but more about his team being healthy. His pre-season hopes are no different than any other college players' in the country: win every game and play for championships.

Not many would expect that dream to come true for Alabama in 2005. More certain to come true is Darby's vision of his return to the playing field on September 3, 2005. Well, maybe the vision is a bit of an exaggeration.

"We run out of the tunnel," he said. "You know the fans are already going to be loud. I see myself running out of the tunnel with my pads on and everyone just getting louder when they see me, because most everybody thought I was going to be done."

"That scene, and them calling out the lineup and hearing them say 'the starting tailback for Alabama, Kenneth Darby.' That's amazing, the emotion and expression people are going to show when they see it, and how I'm going to feel when my name is announced over the PA."

"I see the smiles on peoples' faces when I get on the field and get the ball for the first time. Probably break two or three tackles and run it in for a touchdown, just how loud it gets."

"It's going to be an amazing feeling. I see it like it's going to happen tomorrow." ■

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"I am very grateful to Dr. Witt and Mal Moore for their support and belief in our program," Gottfried said. "They have made a commitment to basketball and for that I am very appreciative. Our staff has done a tremendous job and our young men continue to make me proud on and off the court. This is a place where my wife and I want to be for a long time. We want to have a program that

will compete at the national level, while at the same time graduate our young men. Mal Moore is a tremendous person to work for and our relationship makes all the difference. There is no question that his leadership has helped this basketball program, especially with the commitment to our facilities."

Gottfried, 41, has been the head basketball coach at Alabama since March, 1998, compiling

a 143-83 record. He has averaged 22.6 wins over the past five seasons, including an appearance in the NCAA's Elite Eight in 2004. Gottfried has guided the Crimson Tide to four consecutive NCAA Tournament appearances. He has a 210-107 record in his career as a head coach, which includes three years at Murray State. ■

Other Personnel Changes

While most of the contract news at Alabama this summer has been about the Big Three—Athletics Director Mal Moore, Football Coach Mike Shula, and Men's Basketball Coach Mark Gottfried—there were other personnel moves in the athletics department.

Bama has hired a new women's golf coach and women's tennis and soccer assistants, and is looking for a new assistant baseball coach.

The University named Hall of Famer Mic Potter as its new women's golf coach. A 1994 National Golf Coaches Hall of Fame inductee, Potter comes to the Crimson Tide after 23 years coaching the Furman women's team, including 10 years during which he served as the Paladins' Director of Intercollegiate Golf.

"My wife and I were so impressed when we walked on campus," Potter said. "Before we visited, we had no idea how beautiful it is. The athletic facilities, campus wide, were so impressive. We weren't really looking to make a change but when we saw all that Alabama had to offer, it was something we wanted to be a part of."

"The golf facility is state of the art, and the academic building (the newly renovated Bryant Hall) is unlike anything I have ever seen before," Potter said.

He guided Furman to 15 NCAA Championship berths, six top-10 national finishes, including an NCAA runner-up finish in 1987. He also took Furman to an NCAA Regional, every year since the format was put into place in 1993.

Potter has been named Southern Conference Coach of the Year eight times and led his team to 35 tournament titles, which puts him third among active coaches. The Paladins won 10 Southern Conference Championships since the tournament's inception in 1994.

He coached 16 NGCA All-Americans, eight NGCA All-Scholar Team selections, 38 All-Southern Conference selections,

12 conference players of the year and four conference freshmen of the year.

"Competing in the Southeastern Conference is an appealing prospect," Potter said. "It is kind of a different level from where I've been. And of course the challenge of taking a program that can be one of the best in the country to that level is very appealing."

Ten of his former players have gone on to play the LPGA Tour.

Potter replaces Betty Palmer, who retired this spring after 17 years coaching the Crimson Tide women.

A 1977 graduate of Cortland State University, Potter majored in physical education while earning four varsity letters: three in soccer and one in golf. He is married to the former Kim O'Banski of Ithaca, N.Y., and the couple has two sons, Ryan and Corey.

Alabama also added a new women's tennis assistant. Coach Jenny Mainz has named Eduardo Rincon as the Crimson Tide's new assistant coach. Rincon, 29, earned a degree from Valdosta State University in May 2005 and this is his first collegiate coaching job. However, Rincon isn't a stranger to the Alabama Tennis program. Eduardo's brother, Mario, served as men's assistant coach at The Capstone from 2002-2004 and is now the head men's coach at Miami.

"To have the opportunity to coach at a school like Alabama is a dream come true," Rincon said. "I've followed Alabama for many years now. I've been here for tennis matches and football games and it's a great place to be."

Rincon will add a wealth of expertise to an already veteran team. His collegiate resume includes the 2002 Mid-South Conference Player of the Year Award, 2004 NCAA Division II All-American honors and the 2004 ITA/Arthur Ashe Leadership and Sportsmanship Award. He also finished his senior year at Valdosta State ranked in the top five nationally in both singles and doubles.

Prior to his collegiate career, Rincon represented his native country of Columbia in Davis Cup competition from 1997-2001. He also made stops on the ATP Tour in over 30 countries world-wide where he competed against the likes of Marcelo Rios and Gustavo Kuerten and earned wins over several of the Tour's Top 50

players.

Alabama Soccer Coach Don Staley added Shanna Caldwell. Caldwell comes to Alabama from Oklahoma, where she spent the last three seasons as an assistant and helped take the Sooners to the 2003 NCAA tournament. She will be involved with goalkeepers.

Caldwell played three seasons at goalkeeper for Connecticut in college and led the NCAA during her senior year in Goals-Against Average. Caldwell will have a young group to work with in the nets this season at Alabama, as the Tide has brought in the three freshmen to fill the void left by Laura Lowman.

Caldwell joins assistant Katie Barnes and the Tide now features two assistant coaches who have played soccer on the professional level. Caldwell has played in the W-League for the Piedmont Sparks and Hampton Roads Piranhas.

In addition to three years at Oklahoma, Caldwell's coaching experience includes one season as a volunteer assistant at UConn as well as an internship in the Huskies' Strength and Conditioning program. She's also coached in the Regions One and Three Olympic Development camps.

Baseball Coach Jim Wells is having to replace his top assistant. Unfortunately, Wells will have an opportunity to stay in touch with Todd Butler. That's because Butler has left the Crimson Tide staff to take the same position at Arkansas.

Butler, 37, a native of Alexandria, La., will fill the same position on Dave Van Horn's Arkansas staff that he did for Bama. Butler, who spent seven years in two different stints at Alabama, takes over as the Razorbacks' hitting instructor, outfielders' coach, and recruiting coordinator.

After serving as a Crimson Tide assistant from 1995-2000, Butler became the head coach at McNeese State, where he compiled a 90-83 record from 2001-03. In 2004, Butler returned to Alabama, handling much of the same duties he will take on at Arkansas.

Wells has not announced a timetable for replacing Butler, but it will likely be prior to the start of fall practice. ■

By Jeff Dunnivant

The Other Fall Sports

Soccer, volleyball seasons approaching

If you think of Fall and sports and University of Alabama, it's natural to think "Football."

After all, the Crimson Tide football team has been among the nation's most prominent for nearly a century. But football isn't the only sport in Tuscaloosa in the fall. And while they may be a few decades behind in tradition, the Crimson Tide is quite competitive in volleyball and soccer, both women's sports at The University.

Alabama volleyball under Coach Judy Green has had some constants, the most important of which is winning. Green has led the Crimson Tide to five straight winning seasons.

Another Bama constant has been strong play from its outside hitters.

But for the former to hold true in 2005, Alabama now must change the latter.

When Alabama makes its 2005 home debut on September 2, fans will see a quicker, more up-tempo style of play. It's a change by design set in motion by the graduation of three of the Southeastern Conference's top players: Erin Heffner, Julie Farley and Kory Tull.

Heffner and Farley were both All-SEC performers in 2004 and Tull was third in the conference in service aces. Without these three in 2005, Green is looking to find the right combination of precision passing and skilled athleticism to make up for the loss of her top three players.

"We've modified our style of play to fit our personnel," Green said. "We're not going to have an Erin Heffner standing out at left front that we can chunk the ball to and let her put it away. Instead, we have to run a middle attack first and then depend on four or five players getting as many as three to five kills per game."

Green and her coaching staff realized that a change would be necessary before the 2004 season concluded. That's why the Tide began working last fall on running every set in its offensive playbook no higher than three feet from the top of the net. It's a style that sets a tiring and rapid pace to play at, but one that Green feels her team is capable of mainly because of its increased athleticism.

"We are definitely more athletic at every position," Green said, "especially in the middle. When you're athletic in the middle, it takes the

Don Staley



Judy Green



pressure off of your outside hitters. If we go back and try to become outside-hitter dominated then we'll be a very easy team to defend."

That means that the offense will be more dependent upon sophomore setters Brigitte Slack and Megan Hudson than a year ago. Green likens her setters to a quarterback or a point guard.

"As our setters go, so goes our team," Green said.

Slack had an outstanding freshman season. She finished third in the SEC with 12.8 assists per game and was named to the SEC All-Freshman Team. However, she's coming off a back injury that kept her sidelined during two of Alabama's tournaments this spring.

What Green is looking for from each of her setters, however, is increased precision passing and the establishing of an offensive rhythm. This is the best passing team she's had at The Capstone and is a major component in the decision to change offensive strategy. In the new scheme, rhythm acts as a timing mechanism and one errant pass could throw off the entire play.

"If our ball control is better this year, and I think it should be," Green said, "then it will make Brigitte Slack a better setter because she'll be able to dish the ball and be more deceptive than she was a year ago. If we try to set left front all year, it'll be a long year."

But as the adage says, schemes don't win games; players do. And despite the Tide's youth, Green is confident she has a number of capable players to help win games. That

includes incoming freshman Sarah Snider at outside hitter.

"Sarah is a great volleyball player and could possibly be the best player that I've ever coached," Green said. "Her level of play is higher than anyone on our team right now and that's just because she's played the game for so long."

Returning for her senior season is Jessica Yearout, who was fifth in the SEC a year ago in digs. Sophomores Crystal Hudson and Bridget Fuentez are also back and will attempt to fill the void left by Farley and Haffner at outside hitter. Hudson recorded 255 kills, 59 digs and 55 blocks as a freshman and Fuentez recorded 88 kills while playing in just 35 of the Tide's 108 games.

"Yearout started for us last year and has improved her ball control over the spring," Green said. "She was already one of the best players in the conference. Hudson and Fuentez will be keys to our success as well, even though they are young and relatively inexperienced at their positions."

Fuentez didn't see much action until the last quarter of the 2004 season and Hudson switched to outside hitter late last season.

The season begins on August 26 at Kansas. The Tide's home debut will be September 2-3 when it hosts the Bama Bash.

In 11 years at The Capstone Don Staley has built Alabama soccer from the ground up. In 2004, Staley's program finally received a home worthy of notice with the completion of the Alabama Soccer Complex and in its first season

the Crimson Tide didn't disappoint, winning seven of its 11 home games and qualifying for the post-season for the first time since 1998. This April Alabama completed an undefeated spring, going 3-0-4. Now, with 10 starters returning for 2005 including the Tide's six leading scorers, Alabama looks to build off its recent momentum and is poised to make its move back to the top of the SEC.

Alabama is one of the most experienced teams in the conference. Four players are on the Tide's career top 10 list of total minutes played. Senior captains Cally Morrill and Allison DeLisle along with forward Libby Probst could all break the record this season.

On the offensive side, Alabama possess one of the most potent front lines in the SEC. Probst, Jordan O'Banion and Kylie Boyd combined for 20 goals, 10 assists and 50 points last season, roughly 48 per cent of Alabama's offensive production. This spring the trio combined for 12 goals in just seven games. Junior Gillian Kilburn added four goals and three assists in 2004 and makes the move from forward to outside-midfielder this fall. The Tide's

ability to keep fresh legs on the field could give opposing defenders fits.

"We're a high intensity team," Staley said. "We're going to be shuffling a lot of numbers in and out, so it's key that we keep fresh legs in there and keep our opponents on the run."

Last season however, Alabama struggled to get its entire front line hot at the same time.

O'Banion showed her quick-strike capability early during her freshman campaign, scoring four goals in her first two collegiate games. But her production dropped off through the middle portion of the season. Boyd's break out came on October 22 with a three-goal performance to lift the Tide past the Georgia Bulldogs and clinch a berth in the SEC tournament. If Alabama wants to improve upon last season's 5-6 SEC mark, Staley believes his forwards must learn to work together more efficiently.

"There are very few secrets in this league," Staley said. "Coaches have a long memory when it comes to marking players who are a handful. Libby Probst is that type of player. She's either going to score or put us in position to score. What O'Banion and Boyd have to do

is read and react to her better and we'll have more scoring chances."

Added into the mix will be Probst's mission to become the school's all-time leader in assists, goals and points. She needs just 12 goals and four assists to earn the career triple crown. It's a feat that won't be easy, but one that is within her reach.

Defensively there may be no group that plays with as much grit and determination as Alabama's back line. It's a characteristic that mirrors the intensity of the Tide's head coach. Defender Emily Pitek and Leigh Alexander have combined for 65 starts over the past two seasons. Pitek earned the respect of all those who know her last season by playing through the SEC tournament with a separated shoulder. Alexander has been a staple in the Tide's defense over the last three seasons, having played over 3,500 minutes. And sophomore Chelsea Stang is Alabama's ace in the hole. Last year as a freshman, Stang started all 21 games and used her strong leg to clear Alabama from a number of dangerous situations.

"Stang has a very strong leg and any time we've had trouble in the back, she's been able to use that leg and get the ball out of there," Staley said. She also knows that she has several tough man-markers behind her in Alelxander and Pitek. Their presence allows Stang to relax and play and do what she does best. She knows there are steady defenders back there helping her out."

But for all the experience that Alabama boasts in its starting line-up, it has just as much inexperience in the net. Laura Lowman's graduation and Carly Carson's departure due to injury has left the Tide without a single goalkeeper with game experience. Staley will look to three freshmen—Kara Gudmens, Karen Landsden and Brittni Lally—to mind the nets, assuring great competition if nothing else when fall camp begins on August 10.

"We're bringing in a crew of three freshmen, so there will be competition in every practice," Staley said. "But that's something I like and we haven't had in the past because of injuries. Even though we're going to have to rely on freshmen there, I'm confident in their abilities and not apprehensive about it at all."

Alabama's season will kick-off on August 26 when it plays Tulane University in New Orleans. The Tide's home schedule features 10 games at the UA Soccer Complex including six vs. SEC opponents. Alabama also gets the luxury of playing defending SEC Champion Tennessee and rival Auburn at home on back-to-back weekends. ■



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By Erik Stinnett

Where Are They Now?

Wood stayed in football as successful prep coach

It wasn't what Dexter Wood did at Alabama that made him a difference-maker. It was what Alabama did to him. At least that's the way he sees it.

Wood played wide receiver for the Crimson Tide from 1969-1972. When he chose to come to Alabama, the Tide was in a pro-set offense and employed a potent passing attack. Halfway through Wood's collegiate career, Coach Paul Bryant changed the offense to the ground-oriented wishbone. The offense eliminated a large percentage of the passes, and also decreased the number of wide receivers in most situations from two or three to one.

The Ozark native, however, stayed true to his commitment to Alabama, put forth his best effort to be a blocker who also happened to be an eligible pass receiver, and finished his career with a career-high five receptions against Texas in the 1973 Cotton Bowl. He was the team's second-leading receiver his senior year.

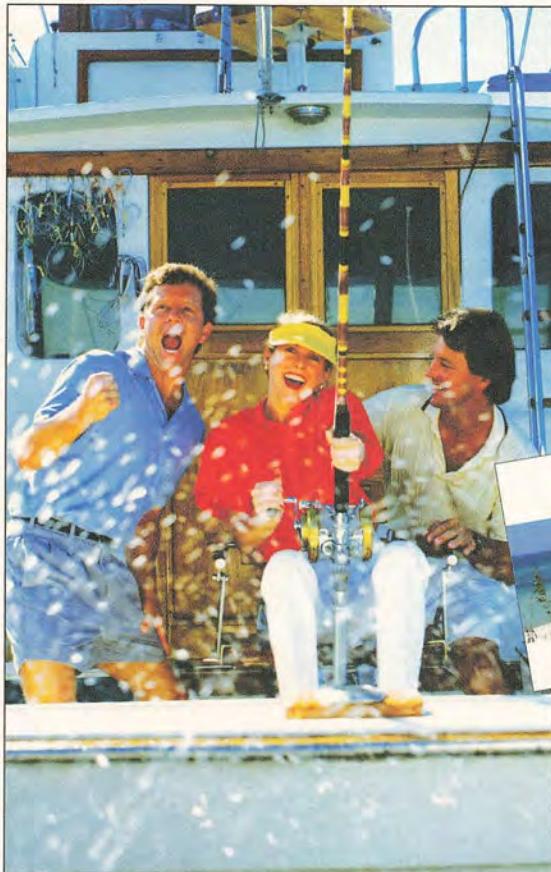
"I was never all-conference or anything like that," the 54-year-old said. "I wasn't a star player. I was a role player. I gained a whole lot more at Alabama than I gave."

Few Alabama football players, though, have given back more after leaving college than Wood. In fact, the former Tider spent 31 years as a high school coach—the last 30 as a head coach—freely dispensing all the knowledge, wisdom, inspiration, insights and life lessons he gained at Alabama to countless young people. Last January Wood retired as one of Georgia's all-time greatest high school football coaches. His 30-year coaching record of 257-92-3 puts him at number 16 in career wins in Georgia high school coaching history.

The numbers are truly staggering over the last five years. From 2000 through 2004, Buford High School, where Wood coached, compiled a 71-4 record, made it to five state championship games, winning three and, along the way, strung together a state-record 47 consecutive wins. That string was snapped last season when a 5A school needed two fourth-quarter field goals to sneak past 2A Buford, 20-14. The closest Buford came to losing before that was a 15-7 win in 2001. Every other game, the Wolves won by at least two touchdowns. Buford's playoff wins during that five-year span also set a Georgia record.

continued on next page

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How did Wood create such a dynasty? It boiled down to mindset. He said he didn't stress the winning streak with his players; instead he preached the greater goal of simple daily improvement. He wanted his players and his assistant coaches to strive to be better today than they were yesterday.

"That's why we really didn't feel the pressure of the streak," Wood said.

He also credited the all-around athleticism of the players he had at Buford. Fifteen of them over the last six years signed to play with Division I schools. One of those players, Darius Walker, set Notre Dame's freshman rushing record last year.

That prompts question number two: Why would Wood retire at the height of his coaching career? It wasn't just so he'd have more time for his two favorite hobbies—golf and fishing.

"The timing was just right," he said. "My 19-year-old son, Ryan, will be a receiver at Duke this fall, and I want to go and see him play. Plus, after 31 years of coaching, I noticed I began to drag a little bit last fall. I was more fatigued. In some sense, I was starting to feel I was losing a little bit of my edge, and I didn't want to be one of those coaches who doesn't know when to walk away, allowing the program to go downhill. I'm at the zenith of my coaching career right now, I have a capable assistant in Jess Simpson to take my place and I've been given the job of full-time athletics director, which is what I wanted so I could remain at Buford. Everything just lined up."

Wood began his coaching career at Gadsden's Westminster Christian School, which later became Westbrook Christian School and the alma mater of current Tide quarterback Brodie Croyle. From there, Wood went to Southside High School in Gadsden and then Jacksonville High School before landing at Gadsden High School. Then it was off to Georgia with stops at Lassiter, Marietta and finally Buford.

Although he's lived in Georgia for the last 21 years, Wood still loves his home state and isn't ruling out a possible return to Alabama at some point in the future. He certainly still has connections to both the state of Alabama and the Crimson Tide. His wife, Martha, is a Birmingham native and his 27-year-old daughter, Rachel, is a UA graduate and is married to Jeff Norris, the son of Lanny Norris, who was a teammate of Wood's at Alabama. Wood also has a sister living in Birmingham and a nephew, Charles Hoke, who will be a freshman tight end on the Alabama football team this fall.

"There is a little bit of a tug to go back home," said Wood, who, in 1995, was elected to the Alabama Wiregrass Sports Hall of Fame. "My wife and I could very likely end up back in Alabama. Who knows?"

Wood still bleeds crimson red, too, even though he doesn't attend as many Alabama football games since his daughter graduated. He has made it to one game each of the past



two seasons, watches whenever the Tide is on television and reads about Alabama on the Internet.

"I'm an avid Alabama fan," he said, "and I'm excited about this fall. I guess I'll kind of be torn between Duke and Alabama football this season. My son still follows Bama football, too."

Of course, playing at Alabama or any other school these days isn't the same as it was during Wood's time. Playing at Alabama in the early 1970s, as Wood will quickly attest to, was truly a test of character and willpower.

"When you're going through it, the question you keep asking yourself is, 'What can I do to survive this?'" said Wood, who roomed with Brodie's father, John Croyle, for three years at Alabama. "We didn't have it as rough as the Junction Boys (the legendary Texas A&M pre-season camp under Bryant in 1954), but when Coach Bryant was getting some criticism after back-to-back 6-5 seasons and once he made up his mind to change offenses, he definitely went back to his old ways of coaching. From my freshman signing class in 1969, there weren't too many that stuck around all four years. I was one of the ones who survived it and stayed with it and was there to see the program turn back around."

What Coach Bryant instilled in his players, Wood said, was a fear of what would happen if Alabama didn't succeed.

"The games were easy compared to practice," Wood said. "We went into games with the confidence that we were better prepared, better conditioned and more hard-nosed. Getting to that point, though, was not an easy process. But those four years truly marked me for life. I learned the importance of playing as a team and how to get up when you've been knocked down. I was totally influenced by those four years."

In fact, Wood's entire career path was altered because of what he experienced as a member of the Alabama football team. A

business major, Wood had no plans to get into coaching or teaching. Those plans changed.

"I remember when I was about to graduate, I went to see Coach Bryant to ask him for some advice about getting into coaching," Wood recalled. "It took me about two or three days just to build up enough courage to do that. I still remember what he told me. He told me to remember two things: first, always have a plan; second, you're only as good as the people you surround yourself with, so surround yourself with good people."

That's exactly what Wood said he tried to do throughout his coaching career. At the same time, he said he learned over the years that coaching high school is a little different than coaching college, so he tried to make the proper adjustments.

"You can't be as hard-nosed and intense coaching high school, and that's not really my personality anyway," he said. "You've got to make it so that playing football is fun for the kids, too. My Christian faith shaped a lot of how I coached. I kind of viewed coaching as a ministry. I wanted to make a positive impact in kids' lives."

Buford assistant coach David Watkins, a friend and former teammate of Wood's at Alabama, believes Wood more than accomplished what he set out to do.

"Dexter and I both had the opportunity to be around Coach Bryant for four years," Watkins said. "The players who played for Coach Wood over the past 31 years were able to see a glimpse of what it's like to play for Coach Bryant. That's a tribute to Coach Bryant, but it's also a big tribute to Coach Wood."

The signs of greatness in Wood, Watkins noted, were first evident during his playing days at Alabama when he selflessly put team ahead of personal goals.

"Dexter is all about self-sacrifice, and he's very humble," Watkins said. "He never looks for self-recognition, and he always gives credit to others. He coaches and leads with an attitude of servanthood, and I think that speaks volumes about his character. That's why in 1995 when I had the opportunity to coach with him, I jumped at the chance."

For an Alabama football player who never made an all-conference team, Wood has left quite a legacy in his chosen profession. And, although his coaching career appears to be over, he may not be done just yet.

"I don't think I'd ever want to coach big-time high school football, but I might return someday as a coach for a small school that maybe needs a fresh start or something like that," he said.

For now, it's Wood who needs the refreshing. After four years of football at Alabama and a coaching career that spanned three decades, Wood will take a well-deserved break from coaching, but will stay close to football, particularly as a proud papa in the Duke stands. ■

Fall Sports Schedules

Football

Date	Opponent	Site	Central Time/TV*	Series Record
Sept. 3	Middle Tennessee	Tuscaloosa	6:00	Alabama leads, 1-0-0
Sept. 10	Southern Miss	Tuscaloosa	6:45/ESPN2	Alabama leads, 33-6-2
Sept. 17	South Carolina	Columbia	2:30/CBS	Alabama leads, 10-2-0
Sept. 24	Arkansas	Tuscaloosa	*2:30/CBS or 6:00/ESPN	Alabama leads, 9-6-0
Oct. 1	Florida	Tuscaloosa	*2:30/CBS	Alabama leads, 19-12-0
Oct. 15	Mississippi	Oxford	*11:30/J-P or 6:45/ESPN2	Alabama leads, 41-9-2
Oct. 22	Tennessee	Tuscaloosa	*2:30/CBS	Alabama leads, 43-37-7
Oct. 29	Utah State (Homecoming)	Tuscaloosa	2:00/PPV	Alabama leads, 1-0-0
Nov. 5	Mississippi State	Starkville	*11:30/J-P or 6:45/ESPN2	Alabama leads, 71-15-3
Nov. 12	LSU	Tuscaloosa	*2:30/CBS or 6:00/ESPN	Alabama leads, 43-20-5
Nov. 19	Auburn	Auburn	*2:30/CBS	Alabama leads, 38-30-1
Dec. 3	SEC Championship Game	Atlanta	TBA/CBS	Alabama 2 wins, 3 losses

*Time and/or television subject to change

Volleyball

Volleyball			Volleyball Continued			Soccer		
Date	Opponent	Time	Sept. 21	@ Auburn	7:00	Date	Opponent	Time
Aug. 26	@ Kansas	7:00	Sept. 25	@ Kentucky	12:30	Aug. 20	Samford (scrimmage)	7:00
Aug. 27	vs. UMKC @ Kansas	Noon	Sept. 30	LSU	7:00		@ Tulane Invitational	
			Oct. 2	Arkansas	1:30	Aug. 26	@ Tulane	7:30
Bama Bash			Oct. 7	@ Ole Miss	7:00	Aug. 28	North Dakota St	Noon
Sept. 2	Loyola-Chicago	12:30	Oct. 9	@ Mississippi State	2:00		@ New Mexico Tournament	
Sept. 2	Indiana	7:00	Oct. 14	South Carolina	7:00	Sept. 2	@ New Mexico	7:00
Sept. 3	Oklahoma	TBA	Oct. 16	Tennessee	1:30	Sept. 4	Akron	TBA
Sept. 6	@ South Alabama	7:00	Oct. 19	Auburn	7:00	Sept. 9	UAB	7:00
			Oct. 23	Ole Miss	1:30	Sept. 11	Troy	1:00
Wisconsin-Milwaukee Invitational			Oct. 28	@ Arkansas	7:00	Sept. 16	Nicholls State	7:00
Sept. 9	Toledo	4:30	Oct. 30	@ LSU	1:30	Sept. 18	Mercer	1:00
Sept. 10	Northern Iowa	11:00	Nov. 4	Florida	7:00	Sept. 23	@ Florida	7:00
Sept. 10	@ Wisconsin-Milwaukee	7:00	Nov. 6	Georgia	1:30	Sept. 25	@ South Carolina	2:00
Sept. 14	Alabama A&M	7:00	Nov. 11	@ Tennessee	6:00	Sept. 30	Kentucky	7:00
			Nov. 13	@ South Carolina	12:30	Oct. 2	Vanderbilt	1:00
Birmingham-Southern Challenge			Nov. 18-20	SEC Championships	TBA	Oct. 7	@ Ole Miss	7:00
Sept. 16-17	Alabama, Birmingham-Southern, Belmont, Jackson State	TBA	Nov. 23	@ Tuscaloosa		Oct. 9	@ Mississippi State	1:00
			Dec. 1-17	@ Ball State	7:00	Oct. 14	LSU	7:00
				NCAA Championships	TBA	Oct. 16	Arkansas	Noon
						Oct. 21	@ Georgia	7:00
						Oct. 23	Tennessee	1:00

Men's Cross Country

Date	Event
Sept. 10	Brooks Twilight @ Memphis
Sept. 17	Crimson Classic
Sept. 30	@ Notre Dame Invitational
Oct. 15	Chili Pepper @ Arkansas
Oct. 29	SEC Championships @ LSU
Nov. 12	NCAA Regionals @ Florida
Nov. 21	NCAA Championships @ Indiana State

Women's Cross Country

Date	Event
Sept. 2	Belmont Opener @ Nashville
Sept. 17	Crimson Classic
Sept. 24	Pre-SEC @ LSU
Oct. 8	@ Auburn Invitational
Oct. 15	Chili Pepper @ Arkansas
Oct. 29	SEC Championships @ LSU
Nov. 12	NCAA Regionals @ Florida
Nov. 21	NCAA Championships @ Indiana State



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